

Historical consultants in the CEE video game industry. Part 2: competence building

Konsultanci historyczni w branży gier wideo w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej. Część 2: budowanie kompetencji

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Abstract: This is the third paper from the *Historical Consultancy for Games* project run by Games Research Association of Poland with grant funding from Centre for the Development of Creative Industries in Poland. It is based on an online survey among 16 professionals, who worked on video games either as historical consultants, or as developers who collaborated with such consultants. Due to the regional focus on Central and Eastern Europe, the survey includes respondents who worked for game studios in Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Serbia. This paper collects expectations and recommendations for competence building in historical game consultancy. This includes recommended tools, methods, and skills, as well as hindsight advice based on professional experience. Finally, the paper discusses curricular suggestions for a formal course in histgameconsultancy for students of history.

Keywords: historical games, game studies, game production, history, heritage, consulting

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Introduction

Previously, in part 1: *Good and Bad Practices*, we focused on the details of doing histgameconsultancy: its aims and generated value, its weaknesses and oft-reported problems, and its good and bad practices – as reported by our respondents from the CEE region. Here, in part 2, we continue the discussion on the basis of the same survey and respondents. This time, we wish to examine the histgameconsulting profession through the lens of required competences, experience, and education. Section 1: *Methods and Respondents* presents the questionnaire and respondents that took part in our survey, and concentrates on their professional backgrounds prior to their involvement with historical game development. Section 2: *Tools, Methods, and Skills*, as its title reveals, is a detailed overview of technical, creative, interpersonal, and academic competences reported as essential or useful by our interviewees. Section 3: *Hindsight Advice* collects responses to a question about professional advice the respondents would give to their younger selves. Finally, section 4: *Towards Formal Academic Training in Historical Game Consulting* reflects on curricular ideas provided by the respondents for a prospective college-level course in game consulting for historians.

Back in 2015, when Collewijn published his thesis based on many interviews with historical consultants and wargame developers, he noted the absence of any kind of education dedicated to this craft. Frank Knack, coordinator of game studies programmes, claimed that not a single game studies curriculum in the Netherlands included the topic of history in games (in: Collewijn, 2015, p. 35). Sabin (2016) complains about the bias and stigma against the introduction of wargames into British academia. Has the situation changed since then?

On the one hand, historical game studies as a field of research has developed immensely (see e.g. Mochocki, 2022). The involvement of expert consultants tends to get spotlight in the popular press (e.g. Contreras, 2023), and sometimes is even discussed as career outlets for people with history majors (RBATRA, 2019; Loroff, 2024). On the other hand, among hundreds of degree programmes in game development, game studies, or game design in the Anglophone world, we found only one with history-themed games as its main theme: *Wargaming and Resilience Planning*

(Brunel University, UK). Other than that, we only found historical game studies or design as single course modules, e.g. at the University of Sherbrooke in Quebec, Canada (see in-depth interviews with the course creators, Robert and Bazile, in: Roy, 2019a, 2019b). None of these, needless to say, covers historical consultancy for games.

We did find one example of an entire curriculum titled history and heritage consultancy (University of Groningen, Netherlands) – but this one does not include consulting for games. It is possible that historical game design, launched in 2024 at the University of Gdańsk, Poland (and co-developed by us), will become the first university to offer formal training in histgameconsulting.

1. Methods and respondents

This research was preceded by a preliminary survey with national game developers organisations in eight CEE countries, in which we asked for the names of most important historical games and game companies from that nation. We also asked for the names of individual historical consultants – or developers who worked with consultants – whom we could invite to the next stage of the survey. About 50% of the respondents, whose views inform the hereby presented paper, have been invited to those recommendations. Others were recruited from our personal networks of contacts. They are:

- Ihor Timoshenko (Starni Games), a Ukrainian game developer, who worked with historical consultants in various roles (designer, producer, programmer, company owner); games he worked on include the *Strategic Mind* series, *Headquarters: World War II*, and *Ukraine War Stories*;
- Joanna Nowak (Warhorse Studios), a Polish historical consultant, who worked on the Czech game *Kingdom Come: Deliverance* and is working on *Kingdom Come 2*;
- Peter Adamčík (3DIVISION), a Slovak game developer, who does historical research in conjunction with his game design responsibilities; he worked on the *Air Conflicts* series and *Workers & Resources: Soviet Republic*;

- Branislav Guláš (Centurion Developments), a Slovak game developer, who worked with historical consultants on *World War 2*;
 - Jacek Komuda (OddInn, Chronospace), a Polish historian, writer and game designer, who worked as consultant and/or designer on various Poland-made games set (mostly) in medieval Europe or the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, including *Hellish Quart*, *Gloria Victis* MMORPG, and *Lotnicy*;
 - Michał Gembicki (Klabater SA, Chimera Entertainment GmbH), a Polish game producer, who worked at various marketing, publishing and production positions for Polish and international publishers; he worked with historical consultants on *We: The Revolution*, *Help Will Come Tomorrow*, *Apocalipsis: Harry at the End of the World*, *Mount & Blade: With Fire and Sword*, and *Inspector Schmidt: A Bavarian Tale*;
 - Jiří Hoppe (Institute of Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague), a Czech historian, who worked as a consultant and designer for the Czech-made games *Attentat 1942* and *Svoboda 1945*;
 - Helen Carmichael (Grey Alien Games), a UK-based historical consultant, who worked for the Serbia-based company Foxy Voxel on *Going Medieval* (and also in the UK on: *Regency Solitaire*, *Regency Solitaire II*, and *Shadowhand*);
 - William Stanowski (formerly: Symulacje Historyczne), a Polish game developer, who worked with historical consultants on the unfinished Poland-made project *Duma szlachecka* MMO;
 - Beata Krzywdzińska (Slavic Magic), a Polish artist working with historical consultants on the highly successful Polish game *Manor Lords*;
 - Jo Hedwig Teeuwisse (Historical Consultancy 30-45), a Netherlands-based historian-consultant, who worked on the Poland-made game *Manor Lords*, and on *Anne Frank House VR* for a Dutch museum.
- Five respondents asked for their identity to remain hidden from the public:
- ANON-1 (male): An anonymous Polish indie game developer, who worked with a historical consultant on two Poland-made historical/archaeological games;

- ANON-2 (male): An anonymous Ukrainian specialist in localisation and narrative design, who worked as a historical consultant on one game made in Ukraine;
- ANON-3 (male): An anonymous Belarusian 3D game artist with an experience in historical reenactment, who worked as a historical consultant on one game made in Belarus;
- ANON-4 (female): An anonymous Polish game designer and developer, who worked with historical consultants on a WW2-themed game and on a prehistory-themed one;
- ANON-5 (male): An anonymous Polish historian and nondigital game designer, who worked as a historical consultant on one strategic video game and one mobile app in Poland (not counting several nondigital narrative projects).

They all received an online questionnaire via Google Forms, which they filled in in June or July 2024. In addition to questions about their name, company, and prior experience, we posed 6 open questions, which constitute the core of the survey. Of those 3 questions have been discussed in our previous article, *Historical Consultants in the CEE Video Game Industry. Part 1: Good and Bad Practices*:

1. What are the benefits of having a Historical Consultant for the game?
2. What part of Historical Consultancy work can be a waste of time?
3. Could you write a few examples of Best and Worst cases of/in historical consultancy that others could learn from?

Here, in Part 2, we continue the debate by addressing the following 3 questions:

4. What would you advise to yourself in the past at the start of your historical consultancy career (if relevant)?
5. What specific tools (templates, software, creative techniques, etc.), methods, skills should expert historians learn in order to be efficient and productive partners to game developers?
6. If a university curriculum for a degree in history were to include courses in historical game consultancy, what should it focus on?

This division in two papers is easily defensible: they naturally break down into parts with different foci. Questions 1-3 are about the impact

of historical consultancy on game development, and 4-6 are about competence-building in histgameconsultancy.

In Table 1 we place our interviewees in three groups, in accordance with how they reported their experience with historical game development. They chose between three options: A) they worked as historical consultants (HCs); or B) they worked in a different role but collaborated with a HC; or C) they had experience both as a HC and as someone collaborating with a HC. In our group of 16, we have 6 consultants, 7 game developers, and 3 people who have worked on both sides.

Table 1. Professional background prior to historical game-making

Q: What was your professional background before you started to work on historical games?
GROUP A – CONSULTANTS
Hoppe, worked as a HC – research fellow
Carmichael, worked as a HC – science journalist and editor
Teeuwisse, worked as a HC – been a historical consultant for film and tv for decades
Nowak, worked as a HC – MA in art history; BA in heritage preservation, specialisation: preservation of architecture
ANON-2, worked as a HC – localization and narrative design
ANON-3, worked as a HC – I had about 10 years of experience in developing computer games as a 3D modeler and animator. I also spent a long time involved in historical reconstruction.
GROUP B – GAME DEVELOPERS
Timoshenko, worked with a HC in a different role – programming, team management, company owner, game designer, producer
Guláš, worked with a HC in a different role – history fan (as hobby) and game developer
Stanowski, worked with a HC in a different role – Digital Frontier: the course of creating games
Krzywdzińska, worked with a HC in a different role I work as a concept artist and illustrator for games and films. Before collaborating with Manor Lords, I had no experience with strictly historical games. However, I have been interested in 20th-century world history for several years.

Gembicki, worked with a HC in a different role

I have worked in the video games industry, at various marketing, publishing and production positions since 2006 [...]. with major international publishers such as: Sega, The Walt Disney Company, Paradox, Blizzard, Activision to independent development studios.

ANON-1, worked with a HC in a different role – Indie game developer**ANON-4, worked with a HC in a different role**

I have a masters degree in [TITLE REMOVED for anonymity] and engineering degree in computer science. I work as a game designer, and have more than 10 years of experience in that field (and game development in general).

GROUP C – CONSULTANTS AND DEVELOPERS**Komuda, worked both as a HC and in a different role with a HC**

I graduated in history [...] I started doctoral studies but did not complete them. My specialization is the history of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Ukraine, and also warfare of the Zaporozhian Cossacks.

Adamčík, worked both as a HC and in a different role with a HC

I do work mainly as game developer, but as I game designer I'm responsible for historical accuracy, too.

ANON-5, worked both as a HC and in a different role with a HC

I have a PhD in history [...]. I taught educational classes, as well as produced events: international exhibitions, marketing events, team building trips [...]. I have been dealing with historical games: board games, role-playing games, text games since 2009 [non professional work].

2. Tools, methods, and skills

Answers to the question about tools, methods and skills are a diverse array. Examining different skill sets that emerge from the descriptions in Table 2, we can see a wide variety of tasks expected of historical consultants. Clearly, some of our interviewees envision the role of the consultant as an external advisor, researcher and fact-checker who only needs research and communications skills. Others assume that the consultant should effectively be an active member of the team throughout the development process, working with the game engine and other professional software. Extracting a summary from such disparate opinions is no easy task. We decided to group the tools and skills around the types of consulting services or tasks.

Research: The researching and fact-checking responsibilities need highly efficient researching skills: knowledge of state-of-the-art publications, the ability to find information and evaluate its credibility, the ability to find useful resources in archives, museums, etc. With regard to software, the key tools are search engines and bibliography managers. Gembicki mentions: Google Scholar, JSTOR, EndNote, Zotero.

Information: Communicating historical information to the team requires presentation skills and the use of presentation software. The standard way is textual information as well as facts and figures, thus the consultant is expected to be proficient in the use of standard office software (Google Office, Microsoft Office), including text editors and data spreadsheets (Excel, Google Spreadsheet). Excel spreadsheets are perfect for data tables with statistics and system parameters, which are useful for systems modeling: essential for wargames. Additionally, ANON-2 mentions online wikis.

Visuals: Another obvious category are tools for visual and audiovisual presentation: our respondents mention Miro, Photoshop, Canva, PowerPoint, and KeyNote. Nowak, Krzywdzińska and ANON-5 emphasise the value of skills in visual design: drawing, storyboarding, use of 2D and 3D graphic design software. Obviously, the visual form of communication will be a priority for art, fashion, and architecture consultants.

Communication: Another aspect of communication is the ability to use synchronous and asynchronous communicators and file-sharing software. Our respondents mention Teams, Discord, Slack for team communication, and Dropbox, OneDrive, SharePoint, Google Drive, and Notion for file-sharing. On top of that, for consultants whose tasks are integrated with the team's workflow, Gembicki adds software for task management: JIRA, Confluence, Trello, Asana. Speaking of communication skills, Adamčík underscores the need for fluency in English.

Feedback: An inherent part of histgameconsulting is reviewing work created by the team and providing feedback, either validating or pointing out inaccuracies. Therefore, the consultant must be able to preview all types of in-game content: read the script, watch cutscenes, examine 3D models and playable builds. While this can be performed entirely within the above-mentioned skills and tools, there are two extra types of useful software. The first is game engines, such as Unity or Unreal, in which the consultant could play game builds and correct errors (e.g. in in-game

texts) directly in the engine. The second type (see ANON-4) are tools for recording gameplay and adding voiceover (example: OBS).

Games: Komuda highlights the importance of familiarity with games, game genres, and the basics of game development. Steam and YouTube are his recommended tools for historians to familiarise themselves with the game market.

Table 2. Tools, methods, and skills

Q: What specific tools (templates, software, creative techniques, etc.), methods, skills should expert historians learn in order to be efficient and productive partners to game developers?

We didn't need any special skills. We fully relied on the leader of the whole team who had these skills (Hoppe).

Excel spreadsheets. Play a lot of games. Understand how the narrative and setting support gameplay, rather than being the sole focus of the project. Yes, the setting is important, and may contain some of the game's driving elements. But that alone does not make a player enjoy the game (Carmichael).

You need to be an expert at using search engines, just googling something isn't enough, you need to know how to play google. But you should also make sure you're always up to date on the latest developments, history never changes but what historians know about the era changes all the time, they learn new things. You need to read the most recent books, something published a few decades ago can already be outdated (Teeuwisse).

Historians must learn foreign languages, usage of all kinds of software, and have a wide spectrum of knowledge. Especially for reconstructions, it is an advantage to have drawing skills, so understanding 2D and 3D software is a must. I have been always developing my art skills, also in digi art, to explain some things also in pictures. This also helped me to understand many game development processes and tools. It is important to work fast and efficiently, to know the internet well and possibilities to get source materials and visual references for others. And of course you must always be ready to learn more, read more and process this knowledge (Nowak).

Since game development practices are largely non-standardized, there are no templates that are followed across the industry. When consultants are hired in advance, to inform the upcoming work, they are usually either interviewed or expected to give a presentation on the subject, so presentation skills are important. When consultants are hired to review and feedback the existing work, it is usually textual (Word documents, online wikis), visual (Miro boards), or interactive (playable game builds), so being able to access this material in the corresponding software is important. The most important skill of all is reference gathering (ANON-2).

In my case, no specific tools were required. The main task was to find a suitable reference, preferably in good quality, and write a short description for it for an artist who does sketches. After that, check its work for compliance, as well as the work of the modeler after that. It happens that the materials that can be found on the Internet are sufficient, but sometimes you have to turn to specialized scientific works. I think that any convenient database can be useful for systematizing the material (ANON-3).

Skills:

1. I would say that number one is being open to new information and being able to do a quality search for information – know where to look and what to look for, not be too condescending to Wikipedia (do not disregard it, but also, do not rely exclusively on it. Remember – it is the first place where players would go to check your facts after the game is out), use some more advanced resources as well. Do not cling too much to what you already know on the subject – be open to new data.

2. My number two is being able to filter the information – the ability to discern and avoid: myths, made-up stories, false information, propaganda and so on. In some cases, it is okay to use myths, if the project allows that – it depends on how serious the game is positioned and such, and also how exactly you use it – it could be vague. So, if you want to use some mythology, you could discuss that with the team and agree on whether it is acceptable and to what extent – how well it would fit the project overall.

Software: We used Google Docs mostly for the text review – easier to collaborate than usual MS Office. All other methods are optional and would depend on the particular project. Photoshop for designing and reviewing game levels (before implementing in Editor) – optional, and may be unnecessary. Unreal Engine 4/5 – to review the actual project, launch game, etc. (This depends on the project, but Unreal Engine is now one of the most used game development tools. Although, it may not be necessary for the HC – it depends on the level of involvement and integration of the HC into the project) (Timoshenko).

The most important thing is to learn the English language. Most of the materials you gather are in English, and if your consultant can't speak English, the whole process is much slower. You must translate the materials for him and you can discuss the matter after. So the most important "tool" is the language (Guláš).

About strategy games: Excel is the most important (in my opinion) (Stanowski).

Tools:

- Miro – for creating visual and text boards that could be shared with dev team members;
- Discord/Slack – for efficient communication with the remote teams;
- Jira/Confluence – for proper documentation creation and task management;
- Trello/Asana – similar to Jira task management tools;
- Dropbox/SharePoint/OneDrive – for efficient file sharing;
- PowerPoint/Keynote – for preparing presentations of collected data;
- Google Scholar, JSTOR for resource lookup;
- EndNote – reference manager;
- Zotero – research.

Basic knowledge:

- Unity/Unreal;
- Photoshop/Canva.

Best practices:

- schedule regular updates and feedback sessions to ensure that the historical content is being implemented accurately and to address any questions or issues that arise;
- conduct workshops or training sessions for the development team to provide deeper insights into the historical context and significance of various elements (Gembicki).

First and foremost – communication tools. Before people get to work, they need to have a common vision that is aligned with what the HC has to say about the project. So, whatever is the messaging platform of choice (Slack, Teams, Discord), the HC has to be present there. I don't think anyone expects a HC to have high-level technical knowledge; probably a set of basic computer

skills is enough, in my opinion no real editing software is required. What is helpful instead is everything that is used to PREVIEW aspects of the game: text, audio, pictures, 3D models, animations – a HC has to be able to see the work of others and approve/correct it. So for instance, there is no point of a HC learning how to use Blender if all they need to do is to preview the design of finished 3D models, which often can be viewed directly in the web browser (ANON-1).

First of all, I recommend all online tools that make it easy to familiarize yourself with the latest types of games and the specifics of creating scripts and designs. A historical consultant, as I emphasize once again, MUST have at least basic knowledge of the mechanisms of game creation, the most important genres, and their divisions. Paradoxically, an interesting tool for getting acquainted with various game genres is Steam – although it is an online store, you can track the latest trends in game production and sales – which genres are currently on top and which are losing popularity. Another tool is YouTube – the consultant can watch gameplay of games similar to the project they are supporting, especially if they do not have time to play them themselves (Komuda).

In addition to the focus on getting familiar with the practice of game planning and production [...], it is worthwhile [...] become familiar with tools to facilitate simple communication of materials, including the creation of clear and uncluttered presentations and handouts [...]. Useful tools for visualization and communication: Storyboarding – for presenting sequences of historical events in visual form. Canva – for creating simple graphics and infographics depicting historical facts. Notion, Google Drive – for managing documents and information (ANON-5).

- basic computer literacy, with the ability to use tools like Google Word, Google Forms, Google spreadsheets, Miro, Task Tracking Software etc.;
- ability to take part in brainstorming sessions and present lectures on given topics;
- ability to record their gameplay and add a voiceover to it (commenting on the game), so i.e. OBS (ANON-4).

I think when studying history, it is a good idea for historians to find some interesting and unusual stories/themes and discuss with the game designers how they could be applied to the game. Also I would for sure consider using AI tools such as ChatGPT to work on it with ideas, or making summaries from longer texts, etc. (Adamčík).

The first thing that comes to mind is the mentioned communication skill – specifically, conveying precise historical information and explaining it with the help of examples (photographs, archival materials, images, book quotes, etc.) while being understanding and empathetic towards employees who are trying to understand and implement the knowledge provided by the historical expert. Another important skill is research techniques, including analysing archival sources, finding accurate information online, sharing collected historical data with colleagues, and clearly presenting the research done. An additional skill that would facilitate providing feedback is drawing. With basic drawing ability, a historical consultant could clearly explain certain mechanisms, for example by showing how historical tools worked, and also point out stitching, material joins in clothing, and even illustrate the layering of historical garments with sketches for colleagues. The choice of tools can be either any preferred ones or those commonly used in the particular game company (Krzywdzińska).

Concluding, it should be remembered that the wide range of skills as outlined in this section is not expected in full from any single consultant. Gliserman, who consults educational historical games, says that 90%

of his work is writing text (as cit. in: RBARTRA, 2019). Navarro, architectural consultant for *Assassin's Creed II*, recalls: "the primary part of my job wasn't anything sexy; looking for documents, compiling them, scanning them... They were all sent in really plain Word documents" (as cit. in: Saga, 2015). When she was asked to review the accuracy of 3D models, she would come to the office and watch the game as demonstrated by developers – she never even played the game herself. The ability to use professional gamedev software, such as Unity or Unreal, is not required from consultants.

3. Hindsight advice

Collected in Table 3, imaginary professional advice to one's own younger self is surprisingly monothematic. Quite unlike the highly diverse responses from Table 2 (above), here the answers have one strong leading theme: the need to understand games as a medium and to learn the specificity of game development. Without this competence consultants face the risk of permanent miscommunication with the team. One Coplestone's (2017a) interviewee compares this to speaking different languages: consultants do not speak "game" and game developers do not speak "history" (p. 13). The need to learn how to "speak game", i.e. to adapt to the requirements of video game making, reappears as key advice in Carmichael, Nowak, Komuda, Stanowski, and Gembicki – and we suspect the same is hidden behind Hoppe's vague remark about the need for open mind and patience with people from other disciplines.

Timoshenko and ANON-2 complete the picture of two incompatible languages by pointing to the limitations of historical expertise that could be achieved by game developers doing historical research on their own. The need to be aware of the limits of one's historical knowledge (Timoshenko) and of the value of hired expert consultants (ANON-2) seems to confirm the assumption that game developers may not "speak History" well enough. Apparently, ANON-2 addresses the same problem from the consultant's perspective: his hindsight advice to himself would be to realise that non-expert partners who lack historical knowledge may be extremely difficult to communicate with.

Short and career-oriented practical advice from Teeuwisse – “get more active on social media sooner” – is the odd one out among the ten answers: the only one not to address the problem of notorious mismatch between historians and developers in their expectations, work practices, and visions of history.

Table 3. Hindsight advice to younger self

Q: What would you advise to yourself in the past at the start of your historical consultancy career (if relevant)?

An open mind, patience, trying to understand people from other disciplines (Hoppe).

To focus from the start on the mechanics and practicalities of the game, to focus research more on aspects that will definitely add fun and flavour to players (Carmichael).

Get more active on social media sooner, it really helped my career (Teeuwisse).

That I am a consultant. I can share some information, explain, get deeper, select, but I am just one member of a big team. The decision to use or refuse my advice is in the hands of the creative director. I am glad I became a member of the Concept Team that focused on visuals and I have learnt quickly to use my artistic skills to understand artists and their doubts, rather than represent only one side (Nowak).

I'm a narrative designer, not a historical consultant, so I would advise myself and any other storytellers to not be afraid and insist to the upper management on hiring a historical consultant. This may seem like an unnecessary waste of money for a seemingly minor benefit, which in fact could not be further from the truth (ANON-2).

A historical consultant in the gaming industry MUST play games or at least have an idea of which titles are currently popular and what the main game genres are. A game is meant for playing (and if it happens to teach history in the process, that is another plus), but it is primarily meant to provide entertainment, so certain simplifications must be included. Therefore, the consultant must make certain compromises so that the historical facts presented in the game do not disrupt the flow of gameplay (Komuda).

Not to assume that what I understand from the customer's demand is the same for him.

In a surprising majority of cases, clients have no knowledge or historical background. Rarely are they historians-amateurs, which does not make things any easier, because such people very often love a subject and feel competent, even confident, in it. However, they do not have the methodology of history or often the criticism of sources.

Clients without historical background often do not fully understand what a consultant can give them and what exactly a historian does. They expect him or her to know everything and fit the facts into the framework they have outlined.

And very often their proposed terms of cooperation turn out to strongly exaggerate the level of independence or decision-making of such a consultant. It's easy to get burned or get caught between scientific integrity and the client's expectations (ANON-5).

We did not have adequate external HC at hand, so a couple of people on the team had to dive deep into the historical period and become sort of internal consultants for the team. Maybe, if we were a larger team and the HC were more widespread/available – we could have invited them as well.

Best advice: do not rely too much on your past knowledge – there always many finer details, so even a well-versed person has to do a lot of reading and research to get all the relevant information – do not overrate your past knowledge of the subject, even if you know it fairly well, there is always more to learn (Timoshenko).

First, make a good game, then make it historically accurate as much as possible, without losing good gameplay. At the beginning, history should be just a framework of your game (Stanowski).

I would advise playing lots of other games both video and board that have a history component built into them, each history consultant should be not only an expert in his historical specialisation but also should be at least at the medium advanced level of game design, understand basic elements of video game production and specifics of game development. Only by blending these elements can HC become a valuable asset for the studio in the video game producing effort (Gembicki).

The roots of the problem of miscommunication between academics and developers run deep. In her next paper, Coplestone (reflects on her own experience, revealing how she – an archaeologist – struggled with this challenge. As she progressed through her interviews and collaborations, she noted that “game developers tended to describe the past as systems, interactions, agency, and multilinear narratives; whilst archaeologists and heritage professionals tended to describe the past as physical things, linear narratives, and the known outcomes of a process” (2017b, p. 85). Some of the game developers seem to be acutely aware of this difference, as they “believed that the narratives traditionally produced by archaeologists – for example, through books, journal articles, or monographs – were not able to be translated into the video game format directly” (ibid.).

Coplestone’s own self-reflection deserves a substantial quotation:

What I found was that even though many of the tools I was leveraging were digital and interactive I was using them to capture and communicate static elements and linear narratives or to speed up a process. In one respect I was physically coding and scripting like the game developers were, yet the way I was thinking and creating still seemed to be substantially different to the developers I had observed in the studios. I was using these elements as a tool to produce a result that described the archaeological processes, as opposed to being the system or process itself (ibid., p. 87).

Following her own observations, Coplestone adjusted her consulting/design work in order to embrace the multimodal and emergent nature

of digital narratives. Two of her projects are discussed in: Copplestone, Dunne (2017).

Coming back to our own respondents, we note that the hindsight advice collected in Table 3 makes a very strong case for practical experience in game-making as a required component of the consultant's skill set. Indeed, many of our respondents explicitly make this recommendation when asked to envision curricular content (see Table 4, below).

4. Towards formal academic training in historical game consulting

What naturally follows from the identification of “not speaking Game” as the historian-consultant's most fundamental problem, our respondents (see Table 4) emphasise the need to teach a practical understanding of game design and development (Carmichael, Teeuwisse, ANON-3, Timoshenko, Stanowski, Gembicki, ANON-2, ANON-4, Komuda, Adamčík, ANON-5). In particular, this should include practice with game documentation: visual reference docs, game design docs, pitch docs, screenplay etc. (Komuda, Krzywdzińska, Adamčík). In a nutshell, the strongest collective recommendation is practical hands-on project-based classes in game design and prototyping. This should be supported with history of games and case studies of historical games (Hoppe, Krzywdzińska, Komuda, ANON-1).

An understanding of the game development process should apparently lead to a pro-playability attitude. The consultant must be ready to compromise accuracy for the sake of gameplay (Carmichael, Teeuwisse, Komuda, Gembicki). Moreover, the consultant should accept a degree of “wastefulness” of his/her work, i.e. the fact that not all collected material will be used in the game (Timoshenko; see also Carmichael in Table 2 in our part 1 paper – Mochocki, Kot, 2024, p. 51). Attitude-forming is another thing that is best learned through practice. However, in the case of historical consultancy, the practice in consulting for a team should ideally entail working as an external consultant, who is not actively involved in any other productive role.

With regard to expertise in historical content, only Krzywdzińska and ANON-2 make specific recommendations, mainly in the area of material

culture: fashion, architecture, ornaments, tools and weapons, ornaments. They also mention folklore (ANON-2) and regional culture, such as music, cuisine and language (Krzywdzińska).

The standard skill set of a historian is foregrounded by Nowak: researching, writing, critical evaluation of sources, presentations, software use. This corresponds with points 1–3 in Timoshenko, and partially appears also in Krzywdzińska and Guláš. Additionally, Hoppe mentions “didactics of history”, which we may link to lecturing for the dev team and to preparing presentations and reference materials for the game. In a way, this is similar to instructional design of educational resources.

The response from ANON-5 stands out in its business-orientation: market analysis, contract negotiation, publishing, etc.

Table 4. Histgameconsulting in university curricula

Q: If a university curriculum for a degree in history were to include courses in historical game consultancy, what should it focus on?

History of computer games, didactics of history (Hoppe).

Sessions taught by game developers about how games are actually made would be valuable. Any historical contributor would be a cog in the larger machinery of the game development team, and the game studio – it would be good for potential historical contributors to learn how that works. Making a game is a long-term project, like making a movie. There will be parallels between these disciplines (Carmichael).

Both research and game development and storytelling basics. A consultant has to be able to understand the developers position and understand why sometimes accuracy has to take a step aside for the playability of the game. As a consultant you have to be a gamer yourself as well, so you can help the developer think about solutions to problems that are as historically accurate as possible but still make the game fun and playable. A good consultant doesn't just say; that's not historically accurate, a good consultant will say; that's not historically accurate but here's a solution that still makes the game playable and fun, but with a few minor changes we can make it a bit more historically accurate. Compromise, think ahead (Teeuwisse).

I think it is not necessary to have such courses.

Students should just learn on Uni good writing, how to communicate – how to do presentations, usage of software for some projects, how to get to knowledge sources and select some information, which has been taught in many studies for years. I hope:) Studies should be a stage in education, where people widen horizons, extend their knowledge and learn how to be independent and creatively use their best skills (Nowak).

The first two things that come to mind are folklore and material culture. Studying folklore can allow historians to consult better on verbal storytelling and types of stories specific to a certain culture/setting. Studying material culture (artefacts, tools, ornaments, architecture, clothing, etc.) can allow historians to consult better on worldbuilding and environmental storytelling (ANON-2).

I think that here it is very important to understand the specifics of a game designer's work, since computer games impose their own requirements and limitations. Understanding the process of creating a computer game in general will be a good addition (ANON-3).

1. Continuous research – you search for new data all the time while you work on the project and look for any extra details that may be needed. You have to know where to look and what to look for.
2. Information resistance – the ability to discern and avoid: myths, made-up stories, false information, propaganda and so on. The ability to judge the information as to how true or improbable it is. Do not just trust blindly anything you find on the web.
3. Data reliability – to make sure your data is well-supported by historical evidence and can withstand scrutiny. Make sure you have reliable sources and no one could reasonably put your facts in question.
4. Tailored data – the game development process requires not just everything you know about the period, but some very specific things, some of which you do not even know yet. You have to be able to understand the project needs and find the relevant information that will support and enrich the project, without bloating it with unnecessary or irrelevant slew of details.
5. Working as a team – be a good team player and learn to cooperate with others and take into account project limitations. Maybe some models or features cannot be implemented or would be too costly to implement, so you need to find a workaround – that is fine. You need to listen and hear what other experts on the team have to say.
6. Rinse and repeat – do not be afraid to cut something that does not fit and replace it with something different if the team is fine with that or requests that. Your goal is the final project that comes out. Do not mourn some details that could not be “squeezed” into the game, be happy about the ones that made it in.
7. Real practice – you would not know how well you do, until you do it (Timoshenko).

As I have mentioned above, the most important is the language. And learn to recognize trustworthy sources. There is a new phenomenon of attempting to falsify history. No historian should succumb to pressure to falsify history or to any modern trends to do so. Every historian should learn his knowledge is not “for sale” and with his knowledge comes honour and responsibility (Guláš).

It should focus on creating games. Really:) (Stanowski)

Certainly, familiarity with historical games and their case studies is important. Showing examples of historical games that accurately defend their historical authenticity, meaning the accuracy of the elements present in the game. Such as: architecture and construction, knowledge of the culture from a specific region of the world (music, language, food), weapons and tools, and the clothing worn by characters in the game. Similarly, showing examples of games that contain glaring errors but are considered historical games, such as incorrectly matched costumes for the period. Besides such knowledge, communication skills are important, meaning giving feedback as a historical advisor. Depending on who the collaboration would be with, whether a graphic designer or a game designer, a well-prepared brief with visual or textual examples

(which involves the ability to research on the internet) is, in my opinion, crucial. Successful communication, understanding, and supporting your historical knowledge with evidence (images, literature, etc.) greatly facilitate collaboration. Nothing verifies this better than practice (Krzywdzińska).

It should focus on equipping students with the skills necessary to effectively collaborate with game developers such as:

- – understand the role of historical consultants in the video game industry;
- – develop skills in historical research and its application to game design;
- – learn communication and collaboration techniques with game developers;
- – explore the balance between historical accuracy and creative storytelling;
- – gain practical experience through project-based learning and case studies;
- – basics of video game production (with focus on game design);
- – consumer insights (consumer research) (Gembicki).

Basics of game design theory, the usual or most typical workflows of gamedev studios to better understand how the games are made, when it's a particularly good or bad time for any input related to historical consultancy.

Study of successful games to showcase how good gameplay coexists with proper historical information (ANON-1).

1. Understanding the difference between historical games, and games based on/inspired by a given time. What are the benefits and educational chances in both of those types
2. A basic timeline of game production, and understanding of what can be changed at a given moment, what kind of information is relevant etc.
3. A basic ability to play different kinds of games, so the consultant can explore the game on their own and provide feedback
4. Ability to write short guidelines documents that underline crucial elements, interesting elements and possible inspiring elements for a given setting, period (ANON-4).

The curriculum should focus on two topics:

1. Knowledge of games, their main genres, and premises, so that the future consultant realizes they are assisting in an entertainment not an educational project, and should be able to recognize the type of gameplay they are dealing with.
2. Understanding the process of game creation and its specifics, so they know what will be required of them. And most importantly: to be able to make historical corrections without disrupting the game development process; to help rather than hinder by imposing ideas that do not fit the given type of gameplay. For example, the consultant should be familiarized with documentation types such as: Game Pitch, Design Doc, Art Book, Script, so they are not surprised by what they receive to read/correct (Komuda).

I think for historic consultants if something there could be some basics from game design, so they would understand how the cores of the games are working, maybe some training to bring some historic events into the screenplay for the computer game, or simplify some historical setup into setup for the video game (Adamčík).

Above all, it should include a rich practical segment 1. from the field of planning, implementation and production of the game: allowing you to learn about the real, not idealized behind-the-scenes of the creation of the game.

It should show market conditions: equally different types of game production, subcontracting and implementation of services from side scopes: implementation of prototypes, multi-stage testing of games, inter-scope consultations, negotiations with publishers, principals. It should include classes on client-customer, subcontractor-principal communication. Such a course should allow the participant to enter the market without being unaware of the realities of the field to be dealt with (ANON-5).

A curriculum uniting all these recommendations would:

1. Retain the standard learning outcomes of a historian: researching, critical evaluation, proper citing and documentation, knowledge of both material and intangible culture, etc.
2. For gamedev-related competences, the programme should have a strong practical component, in which student teams design and develop historical game projects, getting hands-on experience in various creative roles. In terms of knowledge, they should learn about game genres, game market, and multiple case studies.
3. Specifically for histgameconsulting competences, students should practice working solely in the role of historical consultants for another team. The key tasks should include: converting historical materials (textual, visual, numerical) to useful documents and resources; reviewing and giving feedback to game content created by the team; quick-searching and fact-checking details as requested by team members.

Conclusion

It is deceptively simple to divide the competences of histgameconsultants in two areas: the historian's and the game developer's. However, the contact zone between them may be seen as a third specialised area. In the three-fold model:

1. the historian's classic competences include knowledge and understanding of historical periods, as well as skill related to research, criticism of sources, writing, citing, publishing, as well as teaching history (see *Research* and *Information* in section 2);
2. the game-focused competences include knowledge of the game development process, game genres and game market, familiarity

with many cases of games (not only historical), and hands-on experience with game projects and use of related software as well as project management tools (see *Games and Communication* in section 2);

3. the histgameconsulting competences include the conversion of historical information to multiple types of reference resources and game design documentation; quick and efficient feedback and corrections to created game content; and the willingness to balance and compromise historical accuracy for the sake of gameplay (see *Visuals and Feedback* in section 2).

The most common problem in histgameconsulting is miscommunication between historians ignorant of game-making and game developers ignorant of history. A university curriculum for historians that includes practical classes in game development should eliminate this problem. In our research project, the examination of survey results, carried out across three papers by Mochocki and Kot, has directly informed a proposal for such a curriculum envisioned in the Polish academic environment (Pigulak, Gdaniec, Wasiak, 2024), which in turn is followed with a more detailed syllabus and teaching guidelines in: Gdaniec et al., 2024. All these publications are collected in this special issue.

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Konsultanci historyczni w branży gier wideo w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej. Część 2: budowanie kompetencji

Abstrakt: Jest to trzeci artykuł z projektu *Konsulting historyczny gier*, prowadzonego przez Polskie Towarzystwo Badania Gier z dofinansowaniem z Centrum Rozwoju Przemysłów Kreatywnych. Bazuje na ankiecie online przeprowadzonej wśród 16 profesjonalistów, którzy pracowali nad grami wideo jako konsultanci historyczni lub jako deweloperzy współpracujący z takimi konsultantami. Ze względu na ukierunkowanie na Europę Środkową i Wschodnią ankieta obejmuje respondentów, którzy pracowali dla studiów gier w Polsce, Czechach, Słowacji, Ukrainie, Białorusi i Serbii. Artykuł zbiera oczekiwania i rekomendacje dotyczące budowania kompetencji istotnych w pracy historyka – konsultanta gier. Obejmuje to polecane narzędzia, metody i umiejętności, a także ogólniejsze refleksje z perspektywy wielo-

letniego doświadczenia. W końcowej części artykuł omawia propozycje programowe dla formalnego kursu z konsultingu gier dla studentów historii.

Słowa kluczowe: gry historyczne, groznawstwo, produkcja gier, historia, dziedzictwo, konsulting
