

## Potential systemic problems

If the video is working but the sound isn't, or vice versa, at least you know you have a connection. Shut everything down, check that connections are secure, and turn the various components back on one at a time. Try turning your console on first, followed by the television and the amplifier. If your cables are going into a DVD player first instead of directly to your TV, make sure you are using slots labelled as input and not output. Finally, if you are hearing sound but not seeing a picture, there could be a mix up in your cables. Composite and component cables both use the same two audio cables and inputs, so you may be trying to put the wrong cables in the wrong jacks, or you may have the wrong input selected.

If you have borrowed a system or are hooking it up to a different TV than normal, in some cases you must change the settings before you move the system. For example, if your PS3 is currently set to output at 1080p, nothing will show up if you try to run it on a 720p TV instead. You can either change the settings in advance, or change the display settings as needed. Hold the front power button

down for several seconds until you hear a series of beeps. At that point, you should be able to choose "restore factory settings" under the systems settings menu.

To perform a similar procedure with the 360, hold the Y button and pull the trigger button as the system starts.

Unfortunately, in order to reset the Wii's display settings, you need the original composite cables. If you have set your Wii to display at 480p with progressive scan, but attempt to connect it to a television that cannot handle these settings, you will be unable to access the menus in order to reset your settings. The only solution is to use the original composite cables, which automatically resets the display settings.

Finally, if you have a problem you still can't solve, ask for help. Colleagues, program participants, online forums, and tech support help lines can all be of service. Whatever the eventual solution, start recording these incidents (and the eventual solution to the problem, if one is found) in a notebook that is kept with your TV or gaming equipment. That way, everyone will learn from the problems encountered in the past, or at least what to avoid.



# Program Proposal

## Video game triathlon tournament



### Program objectives and rationale

Video games are an activity largely enjoyed by teens. When one plays video games, there is visual stimulation, action, competition, interactivity, a storyline, and improvement with practice which gives a sense of accomplishment.

Some teens may play games alone at home or with a select group of friends. Other teens may feel left out since their family does not have a gaming system or they don't have anyone to play with. Some may be curious about video games but don't know where to start. Holding a large gaming event in the library accomplishes a number of objectives:

Gets teen bodies into the library – potentially non-library using teens. Staff members get a chance to interact with teens, and if they have a positive experience, they will be more likely to return – maybe for more gaming events, or for other programs or resources.

Gives teens a positive place and a positive way to socialize. If teens come to the library with friends and feel that it can be a social event, teen activity in the library is likely to increase.

Exposes parents and other community members to the positive aspects of video games.

Helps break down barriers between groups of teens and their perceptions of each other (*i.e.* girls don't game, people who play certain games are nerds, skaters don't hang out with jocks).

Improves something teens already enjoy. Games are already popular with many teens but may be a solitary activity or they may

only have a certain number of controllers at home since they are expensive. By offering gaming programming at the library, you give them perks they don't have at home: a big screen (or multiple smaller screens), more controllers, more competitors, new friends, a new space, and no parents!

Holding a gaming event can satisfy some of the developmental assets identified by the Search Institute. They include "other adult relationships" (support from non-parent adults) and "community values youth." What a wonderful way for local teens to feel valued, for their pastimes and interests to be turned into a big event by the library – a place they may feel doesn't appreciate them or respond to their needs. Depending on how events are organized, adults from the community might play as well, exposing youth not only to sympathetic librarians but other teen-valuing members of the community.

Another developmental asset that can be met using video games in the library is "youth as resources." If you tap into the knowledge and skill the youth have regarding gaming systems and setting them up, you really give them an opportunity to feel like the stuff they have learned on their own is actually valuable. If you take your gaming systems out in the community, or even for setting them up in-house, letting your teens practice the audio-visual set up and valuing their opinions on programming validates their interests and skills.

Additionally, a well-run tournament can also expose teens to "adult role models," "positive peer influence," "youth programs" (both gaming programs and the potential for other library or community programs), "interpersonal competence," "cultural competence," "peaceful conflict resolution," and "self-esteem" – a variety of internal and external developmental assets. The interactive

environment of a tournament, full of a variety of teens in a range of ages, provides so many opportunities for interaction. If you have three qualifying rounds of 4-8 players each, each participant will interact with 9-21 different people, and likely more throughout the course of the event. The natural course of events around them will provide plenty of opportunity for conversation and making new friends. Everyone is there for a common purpose and as the tournament proceeds there will be plenty to talk about. There may even be disagreements that need to be handled in a positive way.

In sum, objectives would be to encourage socializing, run a successful tournament that is both engaging for the players and those who have been eliminated (fun to watch), and to create a fun, accepting environment for teens that encourages them to return to the library. This also shows that the library is in tune with what today's teens like to do.

### Description of the program

The program would consist of a series of three tournament nights (a triathlon) to be held at a branch of the local public library. They would be held one Friday night per month for three months, scheduled as so not to conflict with other community events appealing to the target audience. The three games used for the tournaments would be of different genres in order to reach a range of players (fighting game: *Super Smash Bros. Brawl*; racing game: *Mario Kart*; music game: *Rock Band*). Prizes would be awarded at each session as well as an overall set of prizes for amassing points over the triathlon.

For of simplicity of set-up and value to gamers, I would choose to purchase, rent, or borrow three Nintendo Wii systems. I would also need at least two Wii controllers per system, but two of the three games can be played using the GameCube controllers (the previous Nintendo system) and they would be easier to acquire by donation or borrowing. The third game, *Rock Band*, requires specialized instrument peripherals that could be borrowed, rented, donated, or purchased.

On each of the three tournament nights, teens can arrive up to 1 hour before the start time to enjoy an open-play set-up. One staff member or volunteer will facilitate the open-play sessions while another handles registration.

Teens will have had the option of registering in advance, but at least 15 spots will be reserved for walk-ins. Advance registration information will be entered in a spreadsheet and marked in a separate column when the player shows up. If there are too many people interested in registering in advance, they can be placed on a waiting list. Night-of registrations can be entered on the spot. No real minimum or maximum of registrants is needed, as the top 16 players from the qualifying rounds will move on to the elimination rounds. This top 16 can be chosen from any size pool, realistically up to about 100 participants. If there are over 60, there may only be time for two qualifying rounds, but if there are under 60 then players should each get three qualifying rounds to build up their score. If there is a tie for the last of the top 16 spots after the qualifying round, tie-breaker rounds will be played until the spots are filled.

To determine who plays where and when, the spreadsheet can be sorted according to different parameters (the numbers 1, 2, or 3 could be written in a column next to the name, for example, and this would determine which station number each player is at - new numbers will be assigned each round). Player names and stations will be called out for each round, or could be projected on a screen or wall. One staff member or volunteer will watch each match and record the results. If the game does not give a numerical points tally, point values

can be assigned to each rank (*i.e.* finishing 4<sup>th</sup> in a *Smash Bros.* match would earn you 5 points, finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> 6 points, 2<sup>nd</sup> 8 points, and 1<sup>st</sup> 10 points). These points can be entered in the spreadsheet, which can then easily be sorted to see who is in the top 16.

Once the top 16 are determined, the player in 16<sup>th</sup> place would face the player in 1<sup>st</sup> place on one machine, while the players in 15<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> would battle on another, and 14<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> on the last machine. You just move through the bracket with the losers being eliminated and the winners advancing to the next round, until you reach the final two (blank tournament brackets can be found online).

The program would use one large projection screen and two televisions. During the qualifying matches, players would take turns playing the system hooked up to the projector (it would be station 2, for example, so most players should be randomly assigned to station 2 at some point in the night). During elimination play, anticipated exciting matches (such as 8<sup>th</sup> place versus 9<sup>th</sup> place, likely a close match) can be scheduled on the big screen. As the field shrinks, it won't be as important to run matches simultaneously because you'll be nearing the end of the event, and the semi-final and final matches can all be played on the big screen. As people get eliminated there will be far more watchers than players so it makes sense to show more matches on the biggest screen.

Once the winners have been determined, points are saved for the next tournament (to keep track of the overall winner), and prizes can be awarded. They should be displayed on a table where the winners get to choose their prize in rank order (the first place player gets first pick from all the prizes).

In addition to the gaming action, snacks will be served at different points throughout the night, allowing each player a chance to eat (food could consist of party pizzas, garlic fingers, water, pop, fruit and veggie trays, and napkins galore). Other games and interesting, related library materials such as manga and magazines will be on tables in the area so that eliminated players will have plenty to do. Library staff can keep an eye out for anyone who looks alone or bored, and try to introduce them to other teens they know, or get them involved in the activities again. Other ways to keep eliminated players involved include having some other prize categories not determined by the score, but by participant votes (best costume, most improved, most enthusiastic, or other fun categories).

For each session, the date for the next event in the triathlon should already have been decided so that this information can be shared with all participants. After the final match, if time permits there can be more open play, or some teens can be asked to help to put away the equipment. The event should end on a high note with lots of encouragement to practice the next game and to come back next time. Staff can also solicit feedback as players leave the library.

Note: the final event in the triathlon, *Rock Band*, will have to be organized slightly differently. Participants can register in advance as a "band" (4 people), or they can be formed spontaneously into bands at the event. Each band will play 3 songs: one chosen by them (so they have time to practice if they wish), one chosen at random (have a spreadsheet with all the songs listed, and use a random number generator to decide which song must be played), and one chosen by the rest of the participants. There are 4 different instruments in *Rock Band* (vocals, drums, guitar, and bass) and you can see detailed scoring for each member of the band after each song has been completed. This will allow overall individual winners to be picked for the season, as well as a band winner for the night. Additional prizes can also be given for costumes, showmanship, or other categories.

**Target audience:** Boys and girls aged 12-18 with any level of experience (from none to lots) with gaming.

**Scheduling:** The three events would take place one Friday night per month from 6:00-9:30pm. This allows the teens to take over the library at a time when it would not normally be in use. Events should be scheduled around other programs in the area that target the same audience.

**Staffing requirements:** 2-5 staff, or at least 1 staff member and 1-4 volunteers: one person to run the registration desk, and one person to facilitate open play time until the event starts. Once the event starts, it will be vital to have one person recording the scores and outcomes and a runner to enter the scores and determine the match-ups. Matches will likely not finish at the same time so one person could record results from all 3 stations; however, it would be easier if one volunteer was in charge of each station.

**Community partnerships:** The library could partner with area schools, youth centres, community centres, electronics stores, rental shops, department stores, existing gaming clubs – any number of related organizations. Partnerships with shops could exist in the form of sponsorships or deals (donate a system and we will purchase all our games and accessories through you).

**Publicity methods:** Great publicity plenty of time in advance will cut down on conflicting events since no one will want to compete with you! Posters around town (particularly in teen-heavy areas), school announcements, the library website, and even just a PowerPoint slide with all the info that is shown at the multiplex would be great publicity methods. Of course, posters in the library and a well-informed staff help too!

**Proposed budget:** *Food:* \$75 per event; *Systems:* borrow; *Games:* borrow (they are very popular so it won't be hard to find them). *Prizes:* solicit donations, or \$100 worth of gift cards and merchandise from a gaming or electronics store (1<sup>st</sup> place: \$50, 2<sup>nd</sup>: \$30, 3<sup>rd</sup>: \$20). If you have to purchase one system and a set of games and borrow or rent the other two sets, the cost would be approximately \$560 CND:

one Wii, one extra controller set, two \$60 games, one \$90 game (*Rock Band* includes the instruments but it costs more). Thus, the total cost for the series of events could be as low as \$225 or as high as \$1185 (\$400 in prizes for the three events plus the overall winners, food for three events, and the cost of purchasing a system and three games). How much effort you want to put in to obtaining things for free or cheap determines the final cost.

**Accompanying library resources:** Displays of related materials such as fantasy novels, books about gaming or set in a game universe, movies based on games, strategy guides, and manga or graphic novels can be set up in the gaming area.

**Equipment needed:** Apart from the gaming system already described, three televisions or two televisions and one projector, as well as a computer to enter the scores and keep track of registration. A microphone or megaphone can also be useful.

**Program evaluation method:** You can have simple feedback forms available at the event itself, or if players communicated through a blog or registered via e-mail you could send them a follow-up e-mail asking for suggestions for the next event or reviews of the program. A survey could be placed on the teen part of the library site, which could include questions for those who did not attend (did you know about it, why didn't you attend, etc.).

In terms of metrics, it will be very simple to track attendance numbers due to the registration system. It can also be noted if anyone shows up just to watch. If staff or volunteers notice anyone leaving early, this should also be recorded, especially if you can find out why the player isn't staying (you may need to adjust the scheduling, or the program itself). Finally, employees who were at the event should keep an eye out to see if the teens who attended return to the library. After the triathlon, all of this information should be compiled and analyzed. If teens are giving positive feedback, the numbers were strong or grew from event to event, and it seems like those who attended had a good time, more events should be scheduled - taking into account any areas for improvement noted in any feedback or observed by staff. Improvements can also be made from one event to the next, or during a single event.

