

The public's overview on the introduction of games, play, and gamification in Romanian libraries

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Abstract: Games, play and gamification are essential for all ages because they allow players to develop useful 21st century skills such as digital literacy, critical and scientific thinking, problem solving, comprehension and communication skills, storytelling skills, etc. The new generation of digital natives requires a different approach in learning new things and libraries could take advantage of that by using gamification on learning content. In this way, libraries could become more welcoming spaces, more open to the public and much more interested in what the public wants. To find out what people think about the idea of playing games at the library, the idea of libraries using gamified activities or if the public would like to use gamified apps on the library websites, a questionnaire-based survey was administered on Facebook and WhatsApp between February 2 and February 8, 2024. Analysis of the answers obtained shows that the Romanian public is open to the idea of libraries where reading, communicating, socializing, acquiring knowledge in various fields such as literature, history, geography can be combined in a fun and enjoyable way with play, games and gamification. Respondents would also like to use gamification on library websites such as a book lending app.

Keywords: libraries; game; play; gamification; Romania; questionnaire-based survey.

Titlu: „Perspectiva publicului asupra introducerii jocurilor, activităților de joacă și a gamificării în bibliotecile din România”

Rezumat: Jocurile, joaca și gamificarea sunt esențiale pentru toate vârstele, deoarece permit jucătorilor să dezvolte competențe utile secolului XXI, cum ar fi alfabetizarea digitală, gândirea critică și științifică, rezolvarea problemelor, abilități de înțelegere și comunicare, abilități de povestire, etc. Noua generație de nativi digitali necesită o abordare diferită pentru a învăța lucruri noi, iar bibliotecile ar putea beneficia prin utilizarea gamificării în activitățile desfășurate cu publicul. În acest fel, ele ar putea deveni spații mai prietenoare, mai deschise către public și mult mai interesate de ceea ce dorește el. Pentru a afla ce părere are publicul despre posibilitatea de a juca jocuri la bibliotecă, despre cum ar putea bibliotecile să utilizeze activități gamificate sau dacă ar fi de dorit utilizarea unor aplicații gamificate pe site-urile bibliotecilor, între 2 și 8 februarie 2024 a fost administrat un sondaj pe bază de chestionar pe Facebook și WhatsApp. Analiza răspunsurilor obținute arată că publicul român este deschis ideii de biblioteci în care cititul, comunicarea, socializarea, învățarea, se pot combina într-un mod distractiv cu joaca, jocurile și gamificarea.

Cuvinte-cheie: biblioteci ; joc ; joacă ; gamificare ; România ; sondaj pe bază de chestionar.

Introduction

An important feature of libraries as public and social spaces is that they can be a place for free, diverse and repetitive activities with many participants from a variety of social groups, that couldn't possibly take place in other spaces in a city and that provide opportunities for people to experience friendlier encounters in which they can identify shared passions (Peterson 2019, 152; Wiseman 2020, 299). For example, in recent decades, children's opportunities for free, unstructured play with their peers, without adult supervision, have significantly diminished (Chudacoff 2007, 185; Gray 2011, 443; Digennaro 2021, 659).

Concerns about leaving children unsupervised, combined with the demands of high school, keep children at home or under adult oversight much longer than in the past. Outside of school, children participate in various activities, such as sports and artistic endeavors, that are organized and supervised by adults. In this context, public libraries can serve as valuable spaces where children can socialize, play and learn new things (Neiburger 2007, 60).

Many people were concerned that libraries would become irrelevant with the development of the Internet. However, the Internet has actually helped attract more visitors to libraries. Some American libraries once featured boxing rings and amphitheatres, yet they also played a crucial role in fostering good citizens through education and training. Today, libraries are facing financial difficulties because librarians have struggled to effectively communicate with users and help the public. Librarians have a nostalgia for books and the traditional concept of the library, but this sentiment alone is not enough to ensure their survival. Scott (2011, 192) considers that libraries will survive if they will do their best to build strong communities around them. Changing users' perceptions of the library can be very difficult, especially when they feel that the library has become outdated and obsolete due to the widespread use of the Internet. They may also believe that the library no longer understands their needs or offers anything interesting.

Although these impressions are unfounded, they persist in the limelight (Levine 2009). Therefore, Branston (2006, 25) advocates for librarians to introduce engaging game programs in libraries as a means of promoting their services and offerings.

In recent decades, libraries in Romania, particularly public libraries, have sought to modernize. Recent studies have proposed models for implementing new managerial processes, such as knowledge management, to support this effort (Madge 2010, 95-96). Other research has aimed to explore and identify trends in Romanian libraries, including what librarians desire, their perspectives on essential cooperation, the roles they play and the challenges they encounter (Madge 2016, 59; Madge 2018, 632). In recent years, libraries in Romania have been working to meet the needs of their users, prompting librarians to investigate their current preferences and requirements. Since the 2000s, studies among Romanian users have aimed to identify their information needs and behaviors (Porumbeanu 2003, 43-77; Porumbeanu 2009, 5-14).

A study conducted in eight libraries in Romania found that while librarians were not very familiar with the term "gamification", they found the concept intriguing. In some public libraries, gamification was already being utilized in activities for children, and two academic libraries had applied it to initiatives related to ecology, environmental protection and stimulating students' interest in reading (Haasio and Madge 2020, 101).

Due to the limited scientific research on games and gamification in Romanian libraries, and the nascent stage of gamification efforts, this study aimed to assess the Romanian public's opinion on introducing such activities in libraries. The findings can be valuable for Romanian librarians interested in implementing innovative strategies to engage the public.

Literature review

Play serves as an educational tool that helps children understand the world, learn about turn-taking, sharing, strategy, and recognize others' emotions (Powell 2013, 836). In today's increasingly digital landscape, libraries are exploring ways to remain relevant to the public. Engaging in games, pretend play, game creation, role-playing, and gamification could provide valuable opportunities to attract people to libraries.

Card games, board games, role-playing games, console-based video games, online games, and puzzles are just a few examples of the games featured in library programs and gaming tournaments (Maluck 2013, 781; Nicholson 2013, 346; Powell 2013, 839; Werner 2013, 791; Brown and Kasper 2013, 757). These games can be integrated with various other programs in libraries (Maluck 2013, 788; Nicholson 2013, 357). Libraries have great potential to enhance educational outcomes by combining games with youth programs. Using a single

game, such as Go, Chess, or Scrabble, or incorporating a variety of game types can provide greater diversity in these offerings (Maluck 2013, 780).

Games and other forms of play are increasingly used in today's libraries to attract users to additional resources and services, while also facilitating engagement among them (Maluck 2013, 781; Nicholson 2013, 348; Young 2016, 4). Exciting gaming tournaments can be organized multiple times a year to raise funds and increase awareness of library programs. Libraries can incorporate various types of games with specific rules for players to follow during tournaments. Prizes could include trophies, snacks, books, or other incentives. Collaborating with local businesses or schools for advertising can enhance the visibility of these programs and potentially generate prize money (Werner 2013, 796). Many American public libraries hosted puzzle contests since the 1930s and chess clubs since the 1950s, demonstrating that games and toys in libraries have historically served as valuable recreational resources for communities (Nicholson 2013, 345).

Pretend play and the creation of imaginative worlds help children gain a better understanding of reality while building confidence, emotional competence, and self-regulation. When combined with literature, pretend play allows children to immerse themselves in stories and improve their reading skills (Powell 2013, 842).

Virtual games are social, collaborative, technology-driven and provide quick feedback, which can be constructive, even if negative. Players often learn from each other (Young 2016, 5). Children and young people are drawn to video games not only for the challenge but also for entertainment, allowing them to experience scenarios impossible in real life, such as embodying significant figures. Through gaming, they acquire a range of knowledge applicable in school, practical skills for real life, and enhance their hand-eye coordination and reading literacy. Players must read and interpret texts both within and outside the game to solve problems and advance, often synthesizing information to help others by posting comments or reviews (Gumulak and Webber 2011, 243; Brown and Kasper 2013, 772). Teens passionate about gaming can assist younger players as well as adults and seniors in navigating games through library programs. Additionally, libraries could create programs for the elderly featuring games like bridge, Scrabble, or other card and board games (Nicholson 2013, 347).

Other types of games that could be used in libraries are tabletop role-playing games. These games are played in social groups, they are inclusive and provide a good opportunity for learning and developing team skills and personal leadership, which are very important in our days. They are based on a set of rules by which a group of people (the players) assume roles (characters) and cooperatively try to overcome obstacles and resolve conflicts. The games can be used to explore serious social issues (Snow 2008, 69).

Scavenger Hunts have a longstanding popularity as an instructional tool in academic libraries, particularly for teaching students how to navigate library resources. This activity involves participants exploring the library to discover useful information in a creative and enjoyable manner, enhancing their future library usage. One significant advantage of scavenger hunts is the opportunity to apply gamification principles, which can lead to a more engaging experience (Stark et al. 2021, 2).

Gamification involves applying game design principles and mechanics to enhance user participation. It transforms the learning process into an enjoyable experience, encouraging students to think logically and solve various problems. Additionally, gamification mechanisms serve to motivate and inspire players (Pulasthi and Sellappan 2015, 52). Gamification can be incorporated into libraries' summer reading programs or applied to non-gaming activities to enhance engagement (Nicholson 2013, 357). Gamification employs a variety of elements, including points, badges, leaderboards, rewards, quests, rules, goals, and a feedback system. Earning points motivates players to engage more deeply with the game (Pulasthi and Sellappan 2015, 54; Haasio, Madge, and Harviainen 2021, 129). Rewards encourage extended playtime, while badges showcase players' competencies. Leaderboards display each player's progress, and quests represent tangible targets or goals. Rules should be simple and easy to grasp, goals must be appealing, and players should receive feedback—both

positive and negative—to identify areas for improvement. These components are essential for effective gamification (Pulasthi and Sellappan 2015, 54). Additionally, incorporating game creation in libraries fosters communication among participants and library staff, enhances problem-solving abilities, and develops teamwork skills, critical thinking, determination, and higher-level cognition and literacy skills (Powell 2013, 841).

Objectives and research questions

To remain trusted institutions, libraries must evaluate their current services to determine if they effectively support social needs, socialization, and learning among users. Librarians should consider whether their traditional activities are still appealing, if book-related programs are sufficient to attract the new generation, and if it's time to embark on a new phase that addresses today's needs. In other countries, particularly the U.S., activities centered around games and play have been implemented for decades, with successful gamification strategies in use for the past 10 to 15 years. Given the lack of research on this topic in Romania, this study aims to explore the public's perspective on introducing games, play, and gamification in Romanian libraries.

The research wants to find the answers to the following questions:

RQ1: What the public thinks about play and playing games in the Romanian libraries?

RQ2: Would the public like to use gamified apps on the Romanian libraries' websites?

RQ3: Would the public like to participate at gamified activities in the Romanian libraries?

Method and limitations

To address these questions, the author created a questionnaire-based survey using Google Forms, which was distributed online via Facebook and WhatsApp from February 2 to February 8, 2024. Surveys offer a quantitative description of public opinion (Creswell 2018) and are an appropriate method for this study.

The questionnaire consisted of 18 questions, and participation was voluntary and anonymous, in accordance with informed consent protocols. The survey questions were pre-tested by eight volunteers.

The survey sample

The target group for this research included the Romanian public from various age groups and social backgrounds who have used or are currently using library services.

The results of this research are not generalizable due to limited sample size.

Sample demographics

During the data collection period, 91 individuals participated in the questionnaire. Of this sample, 85.7% ($n = 78$) were aged up to 50 years, while the remaining 14.3% ($n = 13$) were over 50 years old. Twenty-six of them (28.6%) were aged between 40-49. For the age groups 20 to 29 and 30 to 39, twenty-one people (23.1%) responded equally. For the age categories 10 to 19 years and 50 to 60 years, ten persons (11%) responded equally. Three of the respondents (3.3%) were over 60 years old. As we can see, the age category up to 50 years old was much more interested in completing the questionnaire and sharing their opinion.

For gender identification, 71 of the respondents (78%) identified themselves as female and 20 (22%) as male. The majority of respondents to the questionnaire are women, it may indicate they are more familiar with the places in their town where suitable activities for their children take place and are better able to identify the lack of programs, they would like their children to attend.

By the last level of education completed, 38.5% ($n = 35$) had a bachelor's degree, 33% ($n = 30$) had a master's degree, 14.3% ($n = 13$) had completed middle school and 14.3% ($n = 13$) had completed high school. As shown in Table 1, the majority of respondents had either a bachelor's or master's degree, indicating that this group were engaged and interested in sharing their perspectives to contribute to societal change.

Education level completed	Percentage	Number of respondents
Bachelor's degree	38.5%	35
Master's degree	33%	30
High school	14.3%	13
Middle school	14.3%	13

Table 1: Respondent's level of education

By occupation, 26% ($n = 23$) were students, 16% ($n = 15$) were teachers, 9% ($n = 8$) were librarians, 7% ($n = 6$) were managers and 7% ($n = 6$) did not answer. The remaining 35% ($n = 33$) of respondents had various occupations, such as engineer ($n = 4$), consultants and psychologists ($n = 3$, for each category), retirees, domestic workers, economists and marketing specialists ($n = 2$, for each category), IT analyst, hotel receptionist, journalist, administrator, bank security dispatcher, social worker, civil servant, cyber security analyst, helpdesk specialist, farrier, military, bank officer and hairdresser ($n = 1$, for each category). Respondents are from various fields of activity which can give us a wider range of opinions, based on their experience.

Findings and Discussion

The findings below are organized to respond the three research questions presented above. All respondents to the questionnaire stated that they have utilized library services at some point in their lives. Of the sample, 82.4% ($n = 75$) respondents have used public libraries, 78% ($n = 71$) have used school libraries, 64.4% ($n = 58$) have used university libraries, 15.6% ($n = 14$) have used the National Library of Romania and 10% ($n = 9$) have used specialised libraries. Many of them used several types of libraries. Three used five types of libraries, nine used four types of libraries, 35 used three types of libraries, 24 used the services of two types of libraries and 19 used only one type of library at the time of completing the questionnaire. Seventy-one of them have used between two and five types of libraries, even libraries abroad, as evidenced by their responses, and can make a comparison or suggest improvements based on their experiences in different library contexts.

When asked about their current library usage frequency, 31% ($n = 28$) of respondents indicated that they go monthly, 22% ($n = 20$) go twice a year, 12% ($n = 11$) visited during college but do not go now, 9% ($n = 8$) go every two months, 7% ($n = 6$) go every three months and 5% ($n = 4$) go weekly. The remaining 14% ($n = 14$) visit the library once every 4-5 months or less frequently, depending on their needs. The results show that 52% of respondents visit the library regularly, either a few times a month or every two to three months, suggesting they are active readers and participants in library activities.

Of the total 91 respondents, 86.8% ($n = 79$) appreciated that the libraries they used had the books they were looking for. 61.5% ($n = 56$) valued finding the information they needed, while 38.5% ($n = 35$) liked the variety of activities offered, such as book launches, book clubs, debates, exhibitions, conferences, and school fairs. Furthermore, 24.2% ($n = 22$) appreciated libraries hosting activities involving games, play, and toys. Many respondents primarily visit the library for borrowing books, studying, and obtaining information, with fewer attending for other types of activities. Activities related to games and play are often perceived as more suited for children.

Of the sample, 80.2% ($n = 73$) stated that they have never played games at the library and only 19.8% ($n = 18$) have used library games. Among those who used games, 71% played games in public libraries, 18% in school libraries and 11% in university libraries. Most of them played games in public libraries, spaces intended for all categories of users and where it would be easy to adopt game programs.

When asked if they would like libraries to incorporate games and play into their activities, 93.4% ($n = 85$) of respondents expressed a positive response, while only 6.6% ($n = 6$) said no. This could mean that there is a lack of such activities in our communities and that libraries,

particularly public ones, could attract a new audience by using these kind of services that can combine games into various other educational activities or even organize game tournaments.

As can be seen in Table 2, if games activities would be organized in libraries, 59.3% ($n = 54$) of respondents indicated they would attend to play with friends, 56% ($n = 51$) would come to play with their children. Additionally, 23.1% ($n = 21$) would bring their grandchildren to play at the library and 23.1% ($n = 21$) would come alone. This clearly suggests that there is a strong interest in utilizing this new service, with younger individuals likely to participate with friends and adults bringing their children or grandchildren.

The public would come to play games at the library with	Percentage	Number of respondents
Friends	59.3%	54
Children	56%	51
Grandchildren	23.1%	21
Alone	23.1%	21

Table 2: *The public's preferences about which people to bring to the library to play games with*

As shown in Table 3, when asked why they would like to see games and play incorporated in libraries, 28 respondents believed that games could effectively attract children to libraries, while 10 thought they would encourage children to read. Given that libraries are primarily viewed as spaces dedicated to books and reading, it can be concluded that those in the first category also recognize that activities involving games and play can lead children to the library for the purpose of reading. Additionally, 14 respondents indicated that games could serve as a learning method, while 8 believed that including games in libraries contributes to educational outcomes for players. Three respondents noted that games help in gaining knowledge across various fields. This suggests that a total of 25 respondents view games as effective educational tools that foster new learning and reinforce existing knowledge. Furthermore, libraries are recognized as social spaces for leisure and relaxation, and 23 respondents felt that introducing games would enhance this aspect. The public also appreciates games for their interactivity ($n = 12$) and the collaborative opportunities they offer. Some respondents highlighted that games encourage teamwork ($n = 9$), help in making new friends ($n = 2$), develop memory ($n = 2$), and facilitate personal growth ($n = 1$). This is particularly beneficial for retirees, who may wish to visit libraries to socialize, connect with others, engage in gaming, and potentially participate in volunteer activities to share their skills, such as arts and crafts, drawing, painting, or foreign languages.

Advantages of using games in libraries	Number of respondents
Attracting children to the library	28
Socializing	14
Learning method	14
Interactive/Interaction	12
Helping children discover reading	10
Leisure/Recreation/Relaxation	9
Team spirit/Cooperation/Teamwork	9
Education	8
Communication	4
Gaining knowledge in various fields	3
Meet new people	2
Developing memory	2
Personal development	1

Table 3: *Public's opinion on the advantages of using games in libraries*

Survey respondents were asked to reflect on games they might have wanted to play in the library as children or those they would like their children to play today, providing examples. Since this was an open-ended question and many respondents suggested multiple games, the answers were coded to identify the most popular options. As shown in Table 4, the analysis revealed a strong preference for classic games among the public. Twenty respondents proposed Chess as the game they would like to play in libraries, followed by 16 respondents who support the introduction of Remy in the library, 13 would like Monopoly, 11 respondents for each game would like Scrabble and Puzzle, 5 respondents would like Treasure Hunts to be held in libraries and 4 respondents for each type of game think LEGO and Catan would also be suitable for the public to play in the libraries. TOMAPAN, Sudokku, Rubic, Rebus and Video games were among the preferences of 3 respondents each, while Uno, Dixit, Don't get upset bro, Mime, Jenga, Integrame, Guess the character/object/animal/plant were suggested by 2 respondents each. The games Alias, Yams, Wordwall, Tintar, Trivia, Toci, Tivia, Tetrix, Table, Septica, Solitaire, Activity, Word Wheel, Morocco, Word Game, Go, Guess Who, Fazan, Dame, Fazan in foreign languages had one proposal each. Only 4 of the respondents to the questionnaire didn't want games in libraries as they consider them to be places for quiet and reading and introducing games and play activities would create noise. The rest of the respondents each had at least one proposal for a game: 10 of them came up with one proposal, 4 came up with two proposals for games and the rest came up with more than three proposals for games that could be played in libraries. On top of that, two respondents requested the use of the Kahoot! app, one requested the use of the Quizlet app, two requested programming in libraries, one requested robotics and another one requested gamified reading contests.

Game	Number of respondents	Game	Number of respondents
Chess	20	Alias	1
Remy	16	Yams	1
Monopoly	13	Tintar	1
Puzzle	11	Trivia	1
Scrabble	11	Toci	1
Treasure Hunt	5	Dame	1
LEGO	4	Wordwall	1
TOMAPAN	3	Tetrix	1
Sudoku	3	Table	1
Rubic	3	Septica	1
Rebus	3	Solitaire	1
Video games	3	Activity	1
Uno	2	Word Wheel	1
Dixit	2	Morocco	1
Don't get mad bro	2	Word Game	1
Mime	2	Go	1
Jenga	2	Guess Who	1
Integrame	2	Fazan	1
Guess character/object/animal/plant	2	Fazan in foreign languages	1

Table 4: Games proposed by the public to be played in libraries

Some of the respondents also suggested categories of games, as can be seen in Table 5. Of these, equal percentages of 27% placed board games and general knowledge games in first place, equal percentages of 11% placed card games and role-playing games in second

place, 8% placed logic games in third place and equal percentages of 4% placed puzzle games, strategy games, word games and intellectual games in fourth place.

Game categories	Number of respondents	Percentage
Board games	13	27%
General knowledge games	13	27%
Role Playing Games	5	11%
Card Games	5	11%
Logic games	4	8%
Puzzle games	2	4%
Strategy games	2	4%
Word games	2	4%
Intellectual games	2	4%

Table 5: *Categories of games proposed by the public to be played in libraries*

When asked when they think play and game activities could be utilized in the library, 78% ($n = 71$) of the respondents thought that "School Differently" would be very suitable for various activities including games and play. The "School Differently" program is a unique opportunity for Romanian children to learn in a different and exciting way. Together with peers and teachers, students can visit museums, libraries, art galleries, public institutions, children's theaters, etc. Through extra-curricular activities, they have the opportunity to discover new passions, develop personally, and enjoy an interactive and diverse educational experience. Also, as shown in Table 6, 76.9% ($n = 70$) of the respondents thought it would be very suitable for clubs to be organized in libraries during the summer holidays, 73.6% ($n = 67$) agreed with the regular organisation of game clubs, 65.9% ($n = 60$) preferred the use of games during class visits to the library throughout the school year and 60.4% ($n = 55$) thought that game tournaments would be very appropriate to be organized in the library. Respondents also suggested that game and play activities could provide valuable relaxation opportunities for both children and adults, provided the games are age-appropriate and aligned with the activities' objectives.

The moment in which play and games activities could be used in the library	Percentage	Respondents
School Differently	78%	71
Clubs organized in libraries during the summer holidays	76.9%	70
Regular organisation of games clubs	73.6%	67
During class visits to the library throughout the school year	65.9%	60
Games tournaments	60.4%	55

Table 6: *The public's opinion on the activities in which play and games could be used in the library*

As shown in Table 7, when asked about the type of gamification they would like to find on a library's website, 75.8% ($n = 69$) of respondents preferred a book borrowing app that incorporates points, levels, and leaderboards, 61.5% ($n = 56$) preferred a gamified reading competition, 53.8% ($n = 49$) showed interest in an app designed to help users navigate the library and learn about its services. 48.4% ($n = 44$) expressed a desire for an app focused on educating users about fake news, 38.5% ($n = 35$) preferred an app to learn about their city, and 30.8% ($n = 28$) would like an app addressing plagiarism. Other suggestions from the public were an app for learning foreign languages and a general knowledge game containing rankings. We note that the public would like to see core library activities such as book borrowing or children's reading programs gamified by using points, leaderboards, levels,

rewards to make them more engaging and competitive. Additionally, virtual library tours could appeal to tech-savvy users interested in discovering available services.

Gamified activity	Percentage	Respondents
A book lending app with points, levels and rankings	75.8%	69
A gamified reading competition	61.5%	56
A library orientation app to find out more about the services offered	53.8%	49
An app to learn about fake news	48.4%	44
An app to find information about your city	38.5%	35
An app to learn about plagiarism	30.8%	28
A language learning app	1.1%	1
General knowledge games with leaderboards	1.1%	1

Table 7: Library audience preferences about types of gamifications they would like to see on a library's website

Respondents shared their perspectives on when gamification activities could be effectively implemented in the library. As shown in Table 8, 89% ($n = 81$) thought that gamification would be appropriate to integrate into thematic activities carried out by pupils in the library, where they obtain information in various fields such as history, geography, literature, etc. Fifty-seven (62.6%) of respondents thought that gamification would be welcomed during visits made by classes of pupils, accompanied by educators or teachers, where they carry out library tours. These could be organised as Treasure Hunts to make them more interesting. 52.7% ($n = 18$) of respondents consider gamification part of activities related to robotics, programming, STEAM education and 52.7% ($n = 18$) would use gamification based on points, rankings, badges and levels in an online book club. The consensus highlights that traditional learning methods, such as reading and passive listening, are often less effective and engaging, particularly for digital natives. Adopting varied teaching approaches, especially gamification, could be more impactful. Libraries could establish robotics, programming, and game clubs to facilitate skill acquisition in an engaging manner.

Types of library activities that could be gamified	Percentage	Number of respondents
Thematic activities carried out by students in the library (history, geography, literature, etc.)	89%	81
Library tours (E.g. Treasure Hunts)	62.6%	57
In activities related to programming, robotics, STEAM education	52.7%	18
Online book club	52.7%	18

Table 8: Public's opinion about the activities in which gamification could be used in the library

When asked about their interest in library-organized activities, respondents expressed strong enthusiasm for various options. As shown in Table 9, 49.5% ($n = 45$) chose Treasure Hunts, highlighting a desire for engaging, interactive experiences. Other popular activities included playing Remy (47.3%, $n = 43$), participating in Chess (45.1%, $n = 41$), and building with LEGO pieces or solving puzzles (41.8%, $n = 38$). Additionally, 38.5% ($n = 35$) preferred Scrabble, while 37.4% ($n = 34$) showed interest in using a 3D printer. The interest in programming activities was also notable, with 35.2% ($n = 32$) expressing willingness to participate. Video games attracted 24.4% ($n = 22$) of respondents, and robotics activities drew interest from 18.7% ($n = 17$). Lastly, 8.8% ($n = 8$) showed enthusiasm for Makerspace activities. Despite the majority of respondents being adults, their willingness to engage in

activities like treasure hunts suggests a recognition of the value of integrating games and STEAM education into library programs.

Type of activity	Percentage	Number of respondents
Treasure Hunt	49.5%	45
Remy	47.3%	43
Chess	45.1%	41
LEGO	41.8%	38
Puzzle	41.8%	38
Scrabble	38.5%	35
3D Printing	37.4%	34
Programming	35.2%	32
Video games	24.4%	22
Robotics	18.7%	17
Makerspace	8.8%	8

Table 9: Public's preferences about participating in certain activities involving games organized in the library

Conclusions and recommendations

Even though the findings from this study, conducted among library users via Facebook and WhatsApp, are not generalizable, they reveal a strong preference among respondents under 50 for introducing games, play, and gamification in libraries. This demographic sees these initiatives as valuable opportunities for enjoyable, interactive, and educational engagement, allowing them to acquire skills typically gained through gaming.

Many respondents reminisced fondly about past library game activities and expressed a desire for their children to experience similar opportunities. Others, while not having participated directly, acknowledged the benefits of such activities, viewing them as essential for modernizing library services. There is a clear call for libraries to evolve by offering more diverse, entertaining, and engaging programs to better serve the community's needs.

The results indicate a strong interest across all age groups in engaging with playful activities, highlighting a desire for more opportunities to play. Libraries could serve as ideal spaces for these interactions, providing a welcoming environment for community members to gather and enjoy games together.

To fulfill this potential, Romanian libraries should consider diversifying their offerings to include games, play, and gamification tailored for all ages. Establishing a schedule that accommodates adults as well as children could foster greater participation.

Taking inspiration from libraries abroad, Romanian institutions could embrace change by organizing a variety of activities that cater to the evolving preferences of their patrons. While some progress is being made in this direction, challenges such as budget constraints, staff shortages, and the need for librarian training continue to hinder modernization efforts. Addressing these issues will be essential for libraries to fully realize their potential as vibrant community hubs.

For more definitive results, it would be beneficial to replicate this study with a larger sample size and over an extended time frame. This would enhance the reliability of the findings and provide deeper insights into the preferences and needs of library users regarding games, play, and gamification. A broader scope could also help capture diverse opinions from various demographics, further informing library strategies for engagement and modernization.

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