

# Roll\$20: Economies of Labor in Online Role-Playing Games

Cameron Irby, University of Texas at Dallas

Tabletop Role-Playing Games (TTRPGs) exploded in popularity during the COVID pandemic. This is in large part due to the proliferation of online tools such as Virtual TableTop services (VTTs)—audio-visual conferencing software that digitally recreates pen-and-paper games like *Dungeons & Dragons*. These services are marketed as time-saving measures for gamemasters (GMs), but in actuality, VTTs request additional labor from GMs, who must learn the intricacies of their chosen service and navigate digital barriers of access and ability. This labor compounds the already present tasks of managing player expectations and desires, of creating interesting stories and adventures to play, and of making visual aids like handouts and battle maps to give shape to the game’s abstract concepts. Additionally, the increased visibility of TTRPG play via streaming, podcasts, and online video can skew perceptions of what role-playing is or should be. Although some role-playing games have put forth their own solutions to easing the GM’s burden, special attention must be made to the ways the digital turn in TRPGs encourages a further stratification of play, labor, and imaginative worlds.

In many tabletop role-playing games, one player volunteers to be the game’s referee, overseeing the chosen rules of play in addition to ensuring that the other players—tasked with maintaining a single character—can engage with their shared storyworld by performing as helpful townsfolk, villainous minions, and other non-player characters. This is on top of other responsibilities that regularly come with the role of gamemaster, including (but not limited to): purchasing miniatures and props for combat encounters, painting and modifying said props, hosting gatherings at their home or working with a third-party to secure a play space, settling out-of-game disputes between players, preparing or purchasing food for players to eat, curating a pre-made adventure or creating an original story for the players to participate in, and acquiring and memorizing multiple rulebooks to address player questions and rules conflicts.<sup>1</sup> This work reflects Julian Kücklich’s conception of “playbor,”

---

1 The term “gamemaster” will be used as a catch-all for the player assigned this role; however, various games will introduce their own terminology to further establish this player’s relationship to the rest of the table. *Dungeons & Dragons*, for example, uses the widely used “Dungeon Master” title to refer to the upkeep and creation of dungeons for players to explore and loot, while *Cyberpunk RED* alternates between Gamemaster and Referee to highlight the

wherein players volunteer their time and energy as unpaid labor within structures recognizable as play yet still produce some benefit (Kücklich, 2005). Playbor builds on Tiziana Terranova's concept of "free labor," which describes the paradoxical nature of "productive activities that are pleasurably embraced and at the same time often shamelessly exploited," but motions towards the ways games can appear to be un-productive through their players' joy in play (Terranova, 2000). Because of the immense labor involved in the role of gamemaster, many players simply refuse to take on the role either due to a fear of inadequacy or to relish the comparatively lighter workload of playing a single character. Despite this, other players take to the role of gamemaster happily, as it allows for greater creative freedom and can provide personal satisfaction if the other players become emotionally involved with the evolving story.

Despite this labor disparity, role-playing games have rapidly grown in popularity since the release of the fifth edition of *Dungeons & Dragons* (Dungeon Master's Guide, 2014). One part of this growth has been the creation of Virtual TableTop services (VTTs) like Roll20, D&D Beyond, and Foundry, wherein players can create characters, play on digital game boards, and incorporate a variety of software to streamline dice rolls and rules queries. While each service offers unique perks and capabilities, the primary draw of VTTs remains the ability to play tabletop role-playing games with people from around the world. As role-playing remains a niche hobby, VTTs enable players in rural areas or those who lack an interested local network to try new rule systems, meet up with friends, and create memorable stories without needing to gather around a physical table. This proved vital for many players as COVID-19 shut down many in-person gatherings. Through VTTs and other software like Discord and Zoom, players could navigate the pandemic by constantly socializing with peers, maintaining their social skills, and experimenting with their identity (Allison, 2021; Proudman, 2021). Additionally, gamemasters who have crafted intricate storyworlds for their players to build upon through play can either use a virtual tabletop as a repository for their work or publish their writing as a supplement via online marketplaces like DriveThruRPG or Dungeon Masters Guild. This ability to self-publish their narrative settings and creative twists to popular adventures could also help recoup some of the costs of play while encouraging gamemasters to engage in something akin to a gift economy, wherein they use the proceeds of their work to purchase the work of other gamemasters (Scott, 2019). Continuing on that notion, a playgroup may decide to broadcast their play sessions as Actual Plays, which demonstrate both the collective narrative of the table and the moment-to-moment gameplay that helps to define whether efforts to change

---

player's purpose of settling rule disputes in addition to running the game.

the story are successful; to accomplish this, players may turn to podcasting and audio recording, Twitch or other streaming services, and YouTube as a video repository.

Yet, this push for online play is not without its drawbacks. VTTs promise “powerful tools to automate the tedious stuff,” yet in doing so, tabletop role-playing is made more inaccessible by gating those automations behind additional purchases, requiring gamemasters and players to develop literacy in their chosen software, and placing the entire genre of role-playing in direct comparison to video gaming through the use of graphical engines and purchasable art assets (Roll20, 2024). DriveThruRPG has come under fire for unfairly removing queer content from its marketplace and thus limiting its reach (Hoffer, 2020). And the overwhelming popularity of Actual Plays like *Critical Role* has caused some players to either push for or lament against the professionalization of the hobby. In this article, I will examine notable discourses surrounding the labor economy of online tabletop role-playing games, analyze the digital tools and marketplaces introduced as aids for casual play, and connect these developments to both the professionalization of play and how the labors of tabletop role-players should be counted.

## Imbalanced Play

Tabletop role-playing games that designate a gamemaster present an imbalance of power and of labor by their very nature. The *Dungeon Master's Guide* for the fifth edition of *Dungeons & Dragons* describes the gamemaster as simultaneously the “Master of Worlds,” “Master of Adventures,” and “Master of Rules;” in so doing, the rulebook claims that gamemasters are “in charge of the game,” yet they must keep players “coming back for more” by sacrificing their personal enjoyment for the group’s collective benefit (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, 2014). This dual identity—as master of the in-game universe and servant of the table—often leads to players forgoing the role entirely. In a post to the *r/rpg* subreddit, u/MercSapient describes how the massive popularity of *Dungeons & Dragons* in recent years has led to a labor crisis, wherein players are unable to find gamemasters who will “run the game, remember all the rules, host, coordinate scheduling, coordinate the inevitable rescheduling when [one] or more of the players (*sic*) flakes, etc.,” adding that they “chafe under the expectation that I need to do all of this or the group will instantly collapse (which HAS happened to me)” (u/MercSapient, 2022). The comments on this post reflect the general attitudes of gamemasters to their labor, with some lamenting how “D&D has players desperate to find a GM, most other games have GMs desperate to find players” and that “DM’ing is mostly, never, casual. So you have a bunch of players who . . . Show up and

expect entertainment.” In other words, the act of running a TTRPG session is viewed as a thankless job performed at the expense of gamemasters to the point where common parlance often refer to playgroups as players and gamemasters—a separation of those who “play” and those who labor.

This conflation of play and labor—playbor—is built into the fabric of the TRPG. Every player at the table is expected to create interesting characters using the framework of their chosen game and to use those characters to explore a jointly constructed storyworld. Yet the bulk of the storyworld is developed by the gamemaster, who must embody everything from a bookstore clerk to the villain’s enchanted suitcase. Compared to the dozens or hundreds of characters a gamemaster must keep track of, other players are only tasked with a singular character’s performance. Though TRPGs often include pre-written adventures or characters for the gamemaster to utilize at home, these are exclusively leveraged towards gamemasters’ eyes only to prevent the campaign from being “spoiled.” In fact, if players have experienced an adventure before, gamemasters are often encouraged to radically alter the narrative flow and characters to keep things entertaining and surprising. One article even encourages gamemasters to combine two different campaigns together to “end up with a custom weaved adventure that nobody could predict” (Heinz, 2019). This emphasis on creating bespoke adventures operates as part of a gift economy, where players give their free time and rapt attention in exchange for a gamemaster’s homespun tales of action, glory, and pathos. This gift economy works in the TTRPG developers’ favor, as gamemasters can “capitalize on significant free labour by fans modding, extending, improving, translating, or advocating for a game without formal recognition, let alone payment” (MacCallum-Stewart & Trammell, 2018). In short, the work that players perform as a part of their practice of play is not often recognized *as* labor by themselves or by others, even if that labor is integral to both the function of TTRPG play and the industry that profits from their playbor.

This labor is made even more visible with the rise of professional gamemasters, who take all the unpaid playbor of the hobby and assign monetary value to their time and efforts as part of a movement to recoup the opportunity costs of play. Because players outnumber gamemasters at the table as many as six-to-one, this professionalization is seen as a market solution to connect players who desire high quality play. Reporting on the growing field of professional TTRPG play, Henry Solotaroff-Webber (2022) found that many players became gamemasters-for-hire at local game stores like Hex & Co. “where players pay the store \$90 per month for four sessions, and the proceeds are split between the store and DM.” This arrangement grants gamemasters the opportunity to craft new adventures, engage in other aspects of the hobby like miniature painting, and reinvest their newfound funds back into their

TTRPG of choice. It should also not be overlooked that developer/publishers like Wizards of the Coast and Paizo (of *Dungeons & Dragons* and *Pathfinder*, respectively) have developed frameworks for organized play at local game stores that are designed to standardize the play experience and, as a result, set a standard for professionals to build from (Bernier, 2024; Paizo, 2024). As professional gamemaster Lauren Bilanko argued, “I look at it that professional DMing is becoming a professional freelance artist, and there needs to be support around it” (Solotaroff-Webber, 2022).

Alternatively, those looking to monetize their role-playing can turn to creating an Actual Play series such as *Critical Role*, *Dimension 20*, or *Dice Funk*—using the rules and structure of tabletop as a basis for an ongoing, heavily improvised narrative experience. These play sessions can take the form of livestreamed adventures as the audience watches in real time, recorded sessions that are very lightly edited for uploading onto YouTube or as a podcast, or tightly edited and directed experiences. The randomized elements of TTRPG gameplay can thus combine with infectious personalities and polished acting in myriad ways, resulting in no two actual plays being alike—even if they play through the same pre-written adventure module such as *Curse of Strahd*. While some actual plays are ways to share their personal adventures, Alex Chalk (2023) noted that actual plays “lean heavily on their listeners for income;” these shows often seek out funding through Patreon subscriptions, Twitch donations, and merchandise sales. But with now hundreds of series either in development or complete with dozens of multi-hour-long episodes, the ability to compete for views with already established series continues to dwindle without pushing the envelope of what is possible via editing, production, acting, and narrative design.

The ongoing professionalization of role-playing has not gone unnoticed by players, however. As *Critical Role*—the Actual Play series helmed by gamemaster and voice actor Matthew Mercer and streamed via Twitch—grew into a subcultural juggernaut, gamemasters began to report that players at their tables would compare them to Mercer, often to critique their personal style of running the game or to describe something about Mercer’s techniques that they wanted in the games they played. This “Mercer Effect” even got the attention of its namesake, who responded on Reddit that “we are a table of professional actors, and I have been DMing for well over 20 years. We have spent our lives training in particular skills that allow us to get as immersed in the characters as we enjoy doing” (u/MatthewMercer, 2018). While Mercer himself advocates against replicating his style of play, what the debate around the Mercer Effect reveals is that the proliferation of professional game masters in online spaces and in person has made more casual players feel inadequate in comparison and have caused some groups to be unable to retain players

because veil somehow lack the professional quality that game masters like Mercer can bring. However, Mercer’s recognizable style and ability to procure finely painted miniatures, set his adventures in a studio capable of providing mood lighting, and craft extremely fleshed out storylines and worlds for his players to build off of—one that can later be sold to his online audience as setting guides and pre-written adventure books—obscures the fact that he and his players are on the job; though from an outsider’s perspective Mercer is ultimately playing a game with his friends and allowing people on the internet to see it, *Critical Role* is a part of Critical Role Productions and just one arm of a multimedia company’s efforts to create entertainment. As Rowan Zeoli noted (2024) in an article for *Rascal News*, “Many who have achieved exceptional success, such as *Critical Role*’s Matt Mercer, rarely have ‘Actual Play performer’ as their exclusive full-time job. . . . Mercer still works as a voice actor in film and video games.” Although the cast of *Critical Role* was able to make \$14 million from 2019 to 2021 via Twitch, the ability for players or gamemasters to “go pro” remains deceptively difficult (Young, 2022). While playing TTRPGs online for fun and profit remains enticing, these games are also enabled and constrained by the very technologies they rely on.

## Digital Dragons

The ability for people to experience role-playing games—either as a player or as a spectator—has rapidly grown with the rise of digital technologies, but that growth has come at a cost. The social pressure to adopt digital tools and participate in online spaces encourages the professionalization of play. The virtual tabletop service Roll20, for instance, promises gamemasters the ability to “automate tedious game mechanics” and to use artwork from a “Marketplace of talented artists,” in order to “lessen the technical burden on the participants, facilitate the formation of new gaming groups, and to make barriers to entry as few as possible when gathering around a table for camaraderie” (Roll20, 2024). And to be fair, the options Roll20 provides are useful for playing online games, including dynamic lighting that can limit a player’s perspective to a portion of the map and search functions for core mechanics of the game. However, these functions are irrelevant if players opt to play without maps or battle grids (“theater of the mind”) or, alternatively, opt to play a system that is not been made available on its software, such as *Blue Rose* (2017) or *Good Society: A Jane Austen RPG* (2018). While Roll20 does offer the ability to add custom scripts, players would either need to know or learn JavaScript to do so, and they would need to purchase a “Pro” subscription (\$99.99/year). Those who opt not to purchase a Roll20 subscription will not only be unable to use the dynamic lighting feature, but they will also be

limited in how many games they can play and be subjected to ads while loading. Additionally, players who want to use official content from their chosen TTRPG would need to choose between painstakingly adding their character's characteristics and abilities to their game or, by purchasing a license through Roll20, skip that tedium and be able to complete their character in minutes. Roll20 does allow paid subscribers to share their rulebooks with the table; this is also limited to encourage players to purchase their own licenses, which are solely limited to Roll20 and are non-transferable to any other VTT. In a sense, Roll20 offers convenience in the aspects of tabletop play that are difficult to replicate (rolling dice, a shared board to play on), yet it is emblematic of how VTTs can add more to a gamemaster's workload and further strain both players' wallets and patience.

These features also presume that all players of an online role-playing session will have equal access to devices that can run these digital tools, internet connections consistent enough to allow for voice/video calls, the luxury of a steady schedule, and the knowledge of how to navigate online spaces in general. I have personally seen players lose internet due to the weather, spend hours trying to navigate the VTT to find information on a gadget their character found, discover they were muted while trying to give an inspirational speech, and fail to coordinate players across time zones. Players also must contend with the VTT itself. In their examination of Roll20, Lawson & Wigard (2021) find that although "the platform has three built-in modes of communication, freely available to all users: text chat, voice chat, and video chat . . . if one user's microphone is functionally out-of-commission, a rhetorical imbalance emerges wherein users with microphones are able to assert more rhetorical agency over the game than the audibly silent participant." Even if everyone's equipment is functional, players may still be thrown off by slight delays in audio, causing players with weaker internet connections to consistently be slower to react to in-game events. This digital divide can thus significantly affect both who gets to play and what kinds of experiences they will have.

Supposing players are on equal technological footing, play can still be disrupted when a player states that they want their character to do something not strictly handled by the TTRPG mechanics. Because a VTT transcribes the rules of a chosen role-playing game to code (which may or may not be edited by players), the table may find itself at a loss as to how to manipulate the VTT to emulate the requested action quickly and effectively. In a similar vein, the promise of a smooth play experience has also stoked fears that players may be unable to understand the underlying game systems. As documented in one thread on a TTRPG forum, players appreciate that VTTs can automate rules-heavy games like *Pathfinder* but worry that complexity may make in-person play appear too tedious to learn; at the same time, another fan

decries “animation and graphics replacing imagination,” as VTTs incorporate 3D graphics or special effects to compete with video gaming and each other (TheRPGSite, 2024). These examples relay an anxiety about how TTRPG play is being altered to fit within the parameters of virtual tabletops.

Should everyone at the virtual tabletop have equivalent access to play and possess a strong understanding of how to play, online TTRPG gamemasters and players must then contend with the wealth of other readily available games, distractions, and pleasures that can sap away one’s attention. Though players at every table—virtual or hardwood—may find themselves checking their phones or flipping through rulebooks during lulls in play, “these absences cannot be easily and immediately noticed during [online] games,” and though some gamemasters may tell players “Do not surf,” players must constantly police themselves and others to ensure that games do not suffer from a player’s “lack of self-control” (Roques, 2021). Even if digital distractions are moderated, players often connect from home, which can create additional interruptions in play from familial commitments and responsibilities to a mischievous pet taking advantage of a player’s lapse in attention or attempting to co-opt said attention.

And these issues of labor and access are in addition to and intersecting with already established barriers to the medium of role-playing games and to online spaces. Tabletop role-playing games have historically been either dismissive of or outright hostile to non-White, non-heterosexual, and non-masculine characters and players, both within the game world and in various supplemental works. For example, Steven Dashiell highlights how “most gamebooks and sourcebooks use ‘he’ as the principal, and generic, pronoun,” and though efforts were made to further generalize players in source material, hobby magazines like *Dragon* constantly used masculine pronouns to refer to hypothetical players, further entrenching the male as default (Dashiell, 2022). As *Dungeons & Dragons* gained a surge of new players during the pandemic, these players quickly connected the game’s usage of race and depictions of “non-human” races like orcs to well-trodden stereotypes of real-world populations. These stereotypes are then ingrained into the rules of the game itself by game designers “translating these racial differences into numerical scores” (D’Anastasio, 2021). In contrast, LGBTQ+ characters and experiences were largely absent from TTRPG sourcebooks, save for the occasional gag item a la *girdle of masculinity/femininity*. As TTRPG production grew in size and scale, some publishers “considered queer people a part of their audience” and included LGBTQ+ characters as examples for character creation, in-fiction entities, and potential allies and villains, although “representations of gay male sexuality are obviously much more prominent and varied than, say, those of transgender people” in TRPGs (Stenros & Sihvonen, 2015). Often, players

desiring play experiences based on their own culture or community will create supplemental rules for use in popular TRPGs or create their own games entirely, but these have been met with hostility for being a “fandom killjoy” and spoiling the fun of (normative) players (Scott, 2019). Although it might be easier to find a play group online, these prejudices and social norms can and have been replicated in other online games, such as through toxic voice chat (Gray, 2020; McLean & Griffiths, 2019).

Although virtual tabletops like Roll20 often have rules against hateful content and can enforce a code of conduct, Roll20’s emphasis on its marketplace for art, maps, and tokens hints at the kinds of experiences that the platform desires from its userbase: polished, marketable, and reusable. In this vein, supplement platforms like DriveThruRPG marketplaces encourage gamemasters to upload their homebrew rules for others to use, but to do so in a standardized format (PDF, JPEG) fit to required specifications. These rules are understandable, as these marketplaces act as publishers for this content, and forums and social media sites can provide avenues for less stringently prepared rules and worldbuilding ideas. Yet the popularity of these marketplaces and the difficulty of sifting through years of Twitter posts for an idea-someone-had does mean that many players will be presented with and encouraged to use publisher-approved work, which can further entrench normative expectations of play. At the same time, those opting to publish their work are entering into a reciprocal and financial relationship with both the publishing website *and* the publisher/developer of the rules system they are supplementing, a relationship that is heavily weighted in the latter’s favor (Zubernis & Larsen, 2012). This lopsided relationship was tested when Wizards of the Coast attempted to alter the Open Gaming License—the legal agreement that allows fans to create *Dungeons & Dragons* content and generate revenue from it—to force supplement writers to report their revenue and operate under a separate commercial license (Codega, 2023). While this attempt was aborted (and eventually shifted to publishing the core rules of the 5<sup>th</sup> edition to a Creative Commons license), the precarity of becoming a full-time writer of supplemental materials for role-playing games—let alone a more casual gamemaster wanting to share their work—on these platforms highlights how the hobby is grappling with its digital dragons.

## Conclusion

Wizards of the Coast’s attempt to extract more profit from *Dungeons & Dragons* players and the ways that virtual tabletop services instrumentalize play for capital gains frames a recent announcement of a VTT service owned and operated by Wizards—Project Sigil—as a further shoring up of players’

ability to play within the confines of a larger, corporatized vision of the hobby. Lin Codega recalled how, in a live actual play special for Sigil, “when [Brennan Lee] Mulligan’s cleric transformed from a dwarf into a dragon, and, after pressing a button to make the minis change shape, Mulligan immediately moved on. His usual flair for the dramatic detailed, and specific was lost . . . replaced by a graphic in a computer program” (Codega & Zeoli, 2024). While technically impressive by virtual tabletop standards, Sigil’s lackluster reception undercuts the rapid expansion of role-playing online as players, fans, and developers have struggled to reconcile their frustrations with these digital spaces with new opportunities to share and profit from their passion.

While in-person games have long since resumed following the pandemic, online role-playing games still remain the only way by which some players are capable of participating in the fandom, in the hobby, and in the craft of RPGs. This may be due to the sheer distance between players, a lack of interest in a particular TTRPG in one’s locale, or a matter of accessibility. VTTs, online supplement distributors, and streaming can all be used to provide these players with a connection to one another and to encourage the creative potential that role-playing can spark. Players also make use of these digital affordances to supplement their income or devote themselves to TRPGs full time. Online games nevertheless incorporate digital tools in order to make up for the affordances lost as a result of the shift from the table to the screen. These affordances can exacerbate already present divides in role-playing and online spaces by increasing the financial cost of play, brokering competition and the professionalization of casual play, reinforcing normative expectations of play, and further devaluing the playbor of gamemasters and players. Though there are no easy solutions to these problems, it remains important to both acknowledge where improvements can be made and what dangers lie ahead.

## References

- Allison, Peter Ray. (2021, April 21). Tabletop roleplaying has given players comfort, connection and control in a world that’s taken them away. *Dicebreaker*. <https://www.dicebreaker.com/categories/roleplaying-game/feature/tabletop-roleplaying-comfort-connection-control-covid-19>
- Bernier, Mike. (2024, March 4). What is Adventurers League? *D&D Beyond*. <http://www.dndbeyond.com/posts/1676-what-is-adventurers-league>
- Chalk, Alex. (2023). Mapping an online production network: The field of ‘actual play’ media. *Convergence*, 29(2), 449–466. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13548565221103987>
- Codega, Linda. (2023, January 5). Dungeons & Dragons’ new license tightens its grip on competition. *Gizmodo*. <https://gizmodo.com/dnd-wizards-of-the-coast-ogl-1-1-open-gaming-license-1849950634>

- Codega, Lin, & Zeoli, Rowan. (2024, August 4). Letters from the Secret D&D Live Show (feat. Sigil). *Rascal News*. <https://www.rascal.news/letters-from-the-secret-dnd-live-show-sigil-gen-con-actual-play/>
- D’Anastasio, Cecilia. (2021, January 24). D&D must grapple with the racism in fantasy. *Wired*. <https://www.wired.com/story/dandd-must-grapple-with-the-racism-in-fantasy/>
- Dashiell, Steve L. (2022). Chasing the Dragon (Magazine): Gender erasure through discourse in *Dragon Magazine*, 1978–2005. *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, 22(6), 620–630. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15327086221097635>
- Dungeon Master’s Guide* (5th ed.). (2014). Wizards of the Coast.
- Gray, Kishonna L. (2020). *Intersectional tech: Black users in digital gaming*. Louisiana State University Press.
- Heinz, Rick. (2019, May 16). Have players that read every campaign book? These GM tips are for you. *Nerdist*. <https://nerdist.com/article/have-players-that-read-every-campaign-book-these-gm-tips-are-for-you/>
- Hoffer, Christian. (2020, July 5). Dungeons & Dragons marketplace caught up in controversy over erotic adventure artwork. *Comicbook*. <https://comicbook.com/gaming/news/dungeons-dragons-dms-guild-oliver-clegg-curse-of-hearts/>
- Kücklich, Julian. (2005). FCJ-025 Precarious playbour: Modders and the digital games industry. *The Fibreculture Journal*, 5. <https://five.fibreculturejournal.org/fcj-025-precarious-playbour-modders-and-the-digital-games-industry/>
- Lawson, Daniel, & Wigard, Justin. (2021). Roll20, access and rhetorical agency in digital game spaces. In Stephanie Hedge & Jennifer Grouling (Eds.), *Roleplaying games in the digital age: Essays on transmedia storytelling, tabletop RPGs and fandom* (pp. 99–112). McFarland & Company.
- MacCallum-Stewart, Esther, & Trammell, Aaron. (2018). Role-playing games as subculture and fandom. In Sebastian Deterding & Jose Zagal (Eds.), *Role-playing game studies: Transmedia foundations* (pp. 364–378). Routledge.
- McLean, Lavinia, & Griffiths, Mark D. (2019). Female gamers’ experience of online harassment and social support in online gaming: A qualitative study. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 17(4), 970–994. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11469-018-9962-0>
- Paizo. (2024, June 6). *Organized Play*. <https://paizo.com/organizedplay>
- Proudman, Amy. (2021, March 3). How Dungeons & Dragons helped me discover my gender identity. *Dicebreaker*. <https://www.dicebreaker.com/games/dungeons-and-dragons-5e/opinion/dnd-discover-gender-identity>
- Roll20—virtual tabletop for playing D&D, Pathfinder, Call of Cthulhu, TTRPGs*. (n.d.). Roll20. Retrieved June 10, 2024, from <https://roll20.net>
- Roques, Noemie. (2021). Multi-windowed play commitments. In Stephanie Hedge & Jennifer Grouling (Eds.), *Roleplaying games in the digital age: Essays on transmedia storytelling, tabletop RPGs and fandom* (pp. 74–90). McFarland & Company.
- Scott, Suzanne. (2019). *Fake geek girls: Fandom, gender, and the convergence culture industry*. New York University Press.
- Solotaroff-Webber, Henry. (2022, November 10). It’s not just you: NYC has a serious dungeon master shortage. *Hell Gate*. <https://hellgatenyc.com/no-on-wants-to-dungeon-master-any-more>

- Stenros, Jaakko, & Sihvonen, Tanja. (2015, July 20). Out of the dungeons: Representations of queer sexuality in RPG source books. *Analog Game Studies*. <https://analoggamestudies.org/2015/07/out-of-the-dungeons-representations-of-queer-sexuality-in-rpg-source-books/>
- Terranova, Tiziana. (2000). Free labor: Producing culture for the digital economy. *Social Text*, 18(2), 33–58. <https://doi.org/10/fp8tzw>
- TheRPGSite. (2024, March 13). *A growing divide: VTT vs. live play at the table*. <https://www.therpgsite.com/pen-paper-roleplaying-games-rpgs-discussion/a-growing-divide-vtt-vs-live-play-at-the-table/>
- u/MatthewMercer. (2018, December 26). *Seeing stuff like th . . .* [Reddit Comment]. R/DMAcademy. [https://www.reddit.com/r/DMAcademy/comments/a999sd/how\\_do\\_i\\_beat\\_the\\_matt\\_mercer\\_effect/eclht66/](https://www.reddit.com/r/DMAcademy/comments/a999sd/how_do_i_beat_the_matt_mercer_effect/eclht66/)
- u/MercSapient. (2022, December 6). *5e DnD has a DM crisis* [Reddit Post]. R/Rpg. [https://www.reddit.com/r/rpg/comments/zedy31/comment/iz5uw2w/?utm\\_source=share&utm\\_medium=web2x&context=3](https://www.reddit.com/r/rpg/comments/zedy31/comment/iz5uw2w/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=web2x&context=3)
- Young, Georgina. (2022, July 14). Unlikely way these friends make over \$14 million a year. *News.Com.Au*. <https://www.news.com.au/technology/gaming/unlikely-way-these-friends-make-over-14-million-a-year/news-story/7a8c27d9045c6eff30d077344cb33d06>
- Zeoli, Rowan. (2024, May 31). Can anyone make a living in tabletop and actual play? *Rascal News*. <https://www.rascal.news/labor-and-ownership-ttrpg-actual-play-emily-friedman-study/>
- Zubernis, Lynn S., & Larsen, Katherine. (2012). *Fandom at the crossroads: Celebration, shame and fan/producer relationships*. Cambridge Scholars.