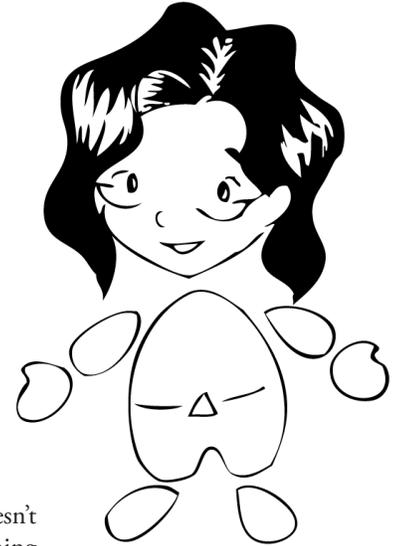# Press Start

We have entered a new era of gaming in the library. Doesn't sound possible, does it? But this is an area that really beginning to take off in libraries across North America. In conjunction with Verizon, the ALA (American Library Association) Office for Literacy and Outreach has created a Literacy and Gaming grant open to applicants from public, school and academic library institutions. The libraries must prove that they are committed to literacy-related gaming services that are creative and sustainable (Steve Zalusky, 2009).

Gaming has exploded over the past few years, becoming one of the top forms of entertainment. There is a continuous argument as to whether video games have or will in future out sell movies. Looking at packaged media in 2008 (includes movies and games), sales were up 20% for video games, while movie sales dropped 6% . This meant that video game sales ended up representing 52.46% of "package sales" while movies were 47.54% (Connors, 2009, ¶ 1).

If there is such a demand for video games, then what exactly is the reason libraries shouldn't be offering video games and related programming? Libraries should reflect the interests of their communities, and while books will likely always be the number one purpose of a library, video games, like movies and music before them, are a way to draw in patrons who may not have thought to use the library before.

Teens and video games are a great combination. Did you know that surgeons who play video games can perform surgeries faster and with fewer errors than their non-gamer colleagues? (Rosser et al., 2007, 183-184). While they aren't in the operating room yet, processes like hooking up A/V systems, navigating menus and options, and creating maps for games build computer literacy and give teens skills that they will use for the rest of their lives.

Games can be good for teens, and they can be good for the library too. Read our issue of the YA Hotline to find out how! We know that you might be a gamer, or you might be a **n00b** - so if you encounter a word in bold, check out its definition in our glossary, beginning on page X. Ready? Press start!

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START