RPG学研究 Japanese Journal of Analog Role-Playing Game Studies

THEORETICAL ARTICLE | 理論論文

Making Analogue RPG History a Historiographical Field: School, University, and Community Inquiry into RPG Pasts

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Abstract

History education research largely treats analogue role-playing games (RPGs) as tools for teaching historical topics or engaging learners. RPG scholarship increasingly examines how hobby histories are produced, remembered, and contested. Analogue RPG history offers a bounded, culturally resonant subject for practising historical thinking and source criticism, understanding oral history, and examining how historical knowledge is constructed. Drawing on historiography, oral history, RPG studies, and history education, this critical framework examines uneven evidence, institutional traces, material artefacts, and public memory. Classroom interventions and comprehensive historical coverage lie outside its scope. Rulebooks and their editions, school magazines, club notices, campaign folios, maps, miniatures, convention reports, photographs, and interviews illuminate archival privilege and silence, how local gaming communities form and disappear, disputes over genres and versions, and media influences on recognition and nostalgia. Research on role-playing in higher education suggests further avenues for university inquiry. Connecting critical historiography with history education positions games as historical artefacts and cultural archives through which school and university students can develop historical competencies and investigate how cultural histories are preserved, narrated, forgotten, and canonised.

Keywords: Analogue role-playing games; historiography; history education; higher education; public memory; *Stranger Things*.

要約

歴史教育研究では，アナログ・ロールプレイングゲーム（RPG）は主に，歴史上の主題を教え，学習者の参加を促す手段として捉えられてきた．一方，RPG 研究では，趣味としての RPG の歴史がいかに形作られ，記憶され，その語りがいかに争われるのかに関心が集まりつつある．アナログ RPG の歴史は，範囲を明確に定めることができ，学習者が文化的な接点を見いだしやすい題材である．学習者はこの題材を通じて，歴史的に思考し，史料批判を実践し，オーラル・ヒストリーへの理解を深めながら，歴史的知識がいかに構成されるのかを考察できる．本稿は，歴史叙述論，オーラル・ヒストリー，RPG 研究，歴史教育研究の知見に基づき，現存する史料の偏り，組織の活動が残した痕跡，物質資料，公共の記憶を批判的に検討するための枠組みを提示する．授業実践を通じた実証研究と通史の叙述は，本稿の射程外とする．ルールブックとその各版，学校の刊行誌，クラブの告知文，キャンペーンの資料綴り，地図，ミニチュア，コンベンションの報告，写真，インタビューを手がかりに，誰の経験が優先的に記録・保存され，誰の経験が記録から抜け落ちるのかを問うことができる．これらの史料からは，地域のゲーム・コミュニティの形成と消滅，ジャンルや版をめぐる論争，個々のゲームの知名度やそれらに対する郷愁にメディアが及ぼす影響も探究できる．高等教育におけるロールプレイングの教育的活用に関する研究は，大学でこうした探究をさらに展開する可能性を示唆している．本稿は，歴史叙述の批判的検討と歴史教育を結びつけ，ゲームを歴史的な事物であると同時に文化的アーカイブとして位置づける．学校や大学の学習者は，ゲームを通じて歴史を探究する力を養いながら，文化の歴史がいかに保存され，語られ，忘れられ，あるいは正典として定着していくのかを考察できる．

キーワード：アナログ・ロールプレイングゲーム，歴史学，歴史教育，高等教育，パブリックメモリ，『ストレンジャー・シングス』．

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Received: 18 March 2026
Accepted: 05 October 2026
Published: 27 November 2026

Reviewing editor: Björn-Ole Kamm, Kyoto University

Citation: Zagami, Jason. 2026. Making Analogue RPG History a Historiographical Field: School, University, and Community Inquiry into RPG Pasts. *Japanese Journal of Analog Role-Playing Game Studies*, 7. (This is a pre-release).

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1. Introduction

History education is not only concerned with what students know about the past. It is also concerned with how students learn to work with evidence, recognise perspective, assess significance, compare interpretations, identify continuity and change, and understand how historical claims become persuasive. These competencies are difficult to develop when historical knowledge is presented as a settled sequence rather than as an interpretive practice. Students need bounded research objects that are accessible, culturally recognisable, and complex enough to reveal the instability of archives, memory, and narration.

Analogue RPG history offers such an object. It is bounded by recognisable artefacts, communities, editions, clubs, magazines, conventions, and play practices, yet it resists simple chronology. Much of its history survives unevenly through rulebooks, school magazines, campus newspapers, campaign folders, maps, miniatures, convention programmes, oral recollections, and public memory. Students can therefore see how histories are made from partial traces rather than recovered from complete records.

Critical historiography has become increasingly important in analogue role-playing game studies because the field has long been shaped by compressed origin stories, linear developmental narratives, and retrospective claims about what counts as the "true" beginning or authentic form of role-playing. Histories anchored only in major rulebooks, named designers, commercial publishers, and visible conventions risk mistaking archival durability for historical totality. Peterson's histories of tabletop role-playing demonstrate the richness of published and para-published (such as xeroxed and photocopied zines) sources while also showing how the hobby's identity was argued into being through debates, experiments, and communities rather than simply declared at a single moment (Peterson 2012; Peterson 2022). Read alongside wider historiographical work on silences, mediation, and the production of historical knowledge, this suggests that analogue RPG history should be approached less as a settled chronology than as a contested archive of traces, memories, and retrospective classifications (Trouillot 1995; Morris-Suzuki 2005; Jenkins 2005).

The argument moves in two directions. Educationally, students require research objects through which they can practise historical thinking and historiographical judgment. Historiographically, analogue RPG history is productive because it is shaped by archival fragility, public memory, community contestation, and uneven institutional preservation. The paper is thus a critical historiographical and methodological essay rather than an intervention study or comprehensive history.

This brings together two adjacent conversations: history education research on role-play as simulation, empathy, and contingency (Beidatsch and Broomhall 2010; Wu 2022; Petousi et al. 2025), and analogue RPG studies on games as social, cultural, and historical formations shaped by community practice, interpretation, and memory (Hammer et al. 2024; Peterson 2012; Peterson 2022). The resulting question is how school- and university-based inquiry into gaming cultures might reveal the mechanisms by which analogue RPG histories are assembled, canonised, and contested.

Schools and universities are not merely pedagogical settings. They are also historical sites in which analogue RPGs have been played, debated, archived, stigmatised, remembered, and forgotten. School magazines, campus newspapers, student societies, club posters, campaign binders, maps, miniatures, oral recollections, and parent or lecturer testimony all register local histories that often fall outside commercial or canonical hobby narratives. Reconstructing those histories through interviews, artefact analysis, and comparison with public memory texts such as *Stranger Things* (Duffer and Duffer 2016) allows students to examine not only what happened, but how analogue RPG history becomes narratable at all (McCarthy 2019; Morris-Suzuki 2005; Trouillot 1995).

2. Historiography, Community Memory, and the Archive of Analog Play

A central problem for analogue RPG historiography is that the field's history has often been narrated through visible, durable, and publishable artefacts: rulebooks, designers, commercial publishers, influential editions, and major conventions. These materials matter, but they also shape the terms of memory. What survives most readily is not always what was most typical, most widely experienced, or most socially important. Canonical narratives of analogue RPG history are therefore structured not only

by historical significance, but by archival visibility (Trouillot 1995; Peterson 2022). A hardback rulebook is easier to preserve than a folder of house rules. A nationally circulated magazine is easier to cite than a school newsletter. A remembered convention acquires historical status more readily than an after-school club that lasted three years and vanished when students graduated. The archive is not neutral. It sorts historical possibility.

This matters especially in analogue RPG history because play cultures are often local, collaborative, iterative, and materially fragile. Campaigns unfold across conversation, improvisation, handwritten notes, photocopies, props, and shared memory. Clubs form around personal networks and dissolve quietly. Gaming practices are transmitted through friendship groups, school spaces, hobby stores, fanzines, convention scenes, and informal mentorship. Much of this history survives only partially, if at all. The result is that analogue RPG historiography is especially vulnerable to retrospective simplification: origin stories harden, influential centres are overemphasised, local variations are flattened, and traditions that circulated without strong publication infrastructures disappear (Bowman 2010; Hammer et al. 2024; Peterson 2012).

The school and the university are among the most revealing sites for examining this problem. In hobby histories, they often appear only tangentially, if at all, even though they have long functioned as important spaces of recruitment, experimentation, stigma, sociability, and transmission. Libraries, lunch breaks, after-school clubs, classrooms used informally after hours, residential colleges, student societies, campus unions, and tolerant teachers or lecturers may all shape whether and how analogue RPG culture takes root. Yet these infrastructures are rarely foregrounded in canonical histories. Their relative invisibility illustrates a broader historiographical tendency: public and commercial traces are privileged over mundane institutional and domestic labour (Beidatsch and Broomhall 2010; Carnes 2014; Shoenberger 2024).

Approaching school- and university-based RPG history as a historiographical field, therefore, makes several hidden processes visible. It reveals how hobby communities are produced through ordinary infrastructures rather than only through spectacular moments; how community memory is relational and contested; and how ephemeral archives such as campaign folders, club posters, yearbook photographs, painted miniatures, and annotated maps complicate the hierarchy that often privileges published text over oral and material culture. The point is not simply that these materials are pedagogically useful. It is that they expose the conditions under which analogue RPG history becomes visible, disputable, and meaningful.

It also shifts learners' status. When students interview former players, compare recollections with surviving documents, inspect artefacts, and identify absences, they do more than practise generic inquiry skills. They participate in historiographical reconstruction. They discover that history is not waiting intact inside a box of old books. It is assembled through claims, comparisons, losses, mediations, and choices about what counts as evidence. That framing is central to this paper. The educational value of analogue RPG history lies in the way it stages the making of history in miniature.

3. From Historical Setting to Historical Object

When role-playing games appear in history education literature, they are usually discussed as a means of teaching historical content. Wu describes Reacting to the Past as an active learning pedagogy in which students assume historical roles, work with documentary evidence, and explore contingency by making decisions within a historical situation (Wu 2022). Guerty likewise argues that tabletop RPGs are valuable in history classes because they can operate both as pedagogical tools and as primary sources, allowing students to engage context, empathy, and contingency while also reading games as artefacts of the times in which they were produced (Guerty 2025). Petousi et al. similarly stress that role-playing can support a hands-on, experiential approach to learning history when historical information is thoughtfully integrated into play (Petousi et al. 2025). These arguments are important, but they usually privilege games as vehicles for entering some other historical world.

The framework proposed here begins elsewhere. It treats analogue RPGs themselves as historical objects. A first-edition rulebook, a campaign binder from the 1990s, a student-designed scenario, a university club flyer, or a painted warband used in an after-school group is not only a prompt for play. It is also evidence. Such materials can reveal assumptions about genre, violence, gender, collaboration, taste, literacy, authorship, pedagogy, sociability, and belonging (Guerty 2025; Peterson 2012; Peterson 2022). In that sense, the paper moves from history in games to histories of games, and from simulation toward historiography.

This shift also clarifies why school and university inquiry matter together. University scholarship has shown that role-play can support sophisticated work in rhetoric, interpretation, empathy, contingency, and the analysis of primary sources, especially in higher education history classrooms using Reacting to the Past and related approaches (Beidatsch and Broomhall 2010; Stroessner, Susser Beckerman, and Whittaker 2009; Carnes 2014; Wu 2022). Yet the same scholarship also warns that immersion alone is insufficient. Productive historical learning depends on explicit source work, structured reflection, and critical discussion of how narratives are built and authorised (Volk 2012; Webb and Engar 2016; Guerty 2025). Those insights strengthen the present argument by showing that analogue RPG history can sustain inquiry across educational levels without reducing historical analysis to gameplay alone.

What follows, therefore, does not advocate a generic gamification of history education. Rather, it proposes analogue RPG history as a bounded but conceptually rich field through which learners can investigate archival fragility, contested memory, canon formation, and the politics of historical representation. Within that field, selective play may occur, but only as one subordinate mode of encounter among many.

The point is reinforced by scholarship outside school settings. Daniau (2016) stresses that tabletop role-playing can support collaborative creativity, reflection, and transformative learning, while Hammer et al. (2024) situate role-playing within a broader research tradition concerned with learning, perspective, and shared imagination. These studies help explain why role-playing matters pedagogically, but they also underscore something else: analogue RPGs are cultural forms with their own histories of practice, discourse, and institutional use. Treating them as historical objects, therefore, does not reduce them to classroom tools. It restores their status as artefacts of social worlds that themselves demand historical analysis.

4. Stranger Things, Public Memory, and Selective Recognition

Stranger Things (Duffer and Duffer 2016) is useful in this framework because it solves an access problem while simultaneously creating a critical problem. It offers non-gamers a recognisable entry point into tabletop role-playing culture through imagery that is immediately legible: the basement table, the rulebook, hand-drawn maps, fantasy talk folded into everyday life, and the social intimacy of a recurring group. Yet the series also compresses, stylises, and nostalgically packages the hobby. That is precisely why it should be treated as a public memory text rather than as a transparent window onto the 1980s.

The use of *Stranger Things* as a prompt requires caution. It should not be used to ask whether a participant's experience was "like" the series, since that risks leading the interviewee toward a nostalgic template. Its value is contrastive rather than evidentiary. The series can help students and researchers ask what public culture has made recognisable, what it has obscured, and how later media shape the pasts people expect to find. Used critically, it helps students distinguish between the past itself, surviving evidence of the past, and later representations that shape what the past is thought to have been.

McCarthy's (2019) analysis of consumerism, nostalgia, and geek culture in *Stranger Things* frames the series as an act of retrospective cultural ordering rather than mere period recreation. The show rehabilitates and sentimentalises forms of youth culture once marked by anxiety, stigma, or marginality. In doing so, it helps organise what later generations recognise as the authentic visual grammar of analogue RPG history. Morris-Suzuki's (2005) argument that media do not merely transmit history but shape its modes of imagination also applies here.

This makes the series pedagogically and historiographically useful. Students can ask which version of gaming culture the series remembers, whose experiences it centres, what it omits, and how its nostalgic structure shapes historical expectations. Did school-based role-playing resemble the domestic intimacy of *Stranger Things* (Duffer and Duffer 2016), or did it more often occur in libraries, classrooms, hobby shops, or university clubs? Were intergenerational perceptions shaped by comparable moral anxieties? How were girls, migrant communities, or religious communities positioned in relation to more visible *Dungeons & Dragons* (Gygax and Arneson 1974) narratives? These questions move students from recognition to critique.

Oral-history work should therefore use the series as a critical object rather than as a template. Instead of asking, "Was your experience like *Stranger Things*?", students might ask where role-playing actually occurred, what kinds of players or spaces are missing from popular representations, whether later media changed how participants now describe their involvement, and which parts of the public image feel familiar, misleading, or incomplete. Such questions use public memory to generate critique rather than nostalgia.

5. Pedagogical Sites: Teaching Students to Read RPG History Historiographically

Before analogue RPG history can be justified as a classroom or university inquiry, the educational purpose must be explicit. The aim is not to add a novel topic to history teaching for its own sake. The aim is to support students' development of historical and historiographical competencies: working with evidence, recognising perspective, comparing interpretations, identifying continuity and change, assessing significance, understanding cause and context, and making warranted claims from incomplete sources. These competencies require research objects that are bounded enough for students to investigate but complex enough to resist simple answers.

Analogue RPG history meets these conditions. At the school level, history studies provide a language for this work through evidence, perspectives, interpretations, contestability, continuity and change, cause and effect, and significance (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority 2026). A school club notice, campus society record, convention programme, campaign folder, character sheet, magazine review, or interview with a former player can be analysed as evidence. Yet such sources rarely provide a complete account. They require students to ask what has survived, what has disappeared, whose practices were documented, whose were ignored, and how later media or community memory have shaped what now seems historically recognisable.

The pedagogical literature on role-play and history remains useful, but it requires careful reframing. In higher education, Beidatsch and Broomhall (2010) show that role-play in undergraduate history teaching can help students engage not only with content but also with historiographical practice itself. Stroessner, Beckerman, and Whittaker (2009) provide empirical evidence from Reacting to the Past showing gains in rhetorical skill and several psychological dimensions associated with engaged learning. Carnes's (2014) wider account of role-immersion at the university level argues that historical games can reshape participation, responsibility, and argumentative engagement in college classrooms. Wu (2022) shows that Reacting to the Past was already in use at more than 350 colleges and universities, with a strong emphasis on primary-source analysis, public speaking, post-game reflection, and historical contingency. Guerty (2025) extends these discussions specifically to history teaching by showing how tabletop RPGs can be analysed as historical sources and as classroom practices.

For this paper, the significance of that literature is not that role-play automatically produces historical understanding. Its value is that carefully structured inquiry can help students move between participation, evidence, interpretation, and reflection. The strongest university studies do not simply celebrate immersion; they pair role-play with source work, structured reflection, and explicit attention to interpretation, contingency, and rhetoric (Stroessner, Susser Beckerman, and Whittaker 2009; Volk 2012; Webb and Engar 2016; Guerty 2025). That is highly relevant here because the present argument is not

that students should merely play games to understand history, but that investigating the history of games can reveal how historical knowledge itself is assembled.

The approach is most suited to senior secondary history, university history-methods courses, public history, cultural history, media history, game studies, teacher education, and humanities research-methods seminars. In teacher education, it can help future teachers distinguish between using games as engagement devices and treating games as historical artefacts embedded in social, institutional, and cultural contexts. Across these settings, the purpose is not to celebrate analogue RPGs, but to use their uneven archive to teach how histories are assembled.

6. Historical Sites: Schools and Universities as Producers of RPG Pasts

The previous section considered schools and universities as pedagogical settings. This section treats them as historical sites: institutions in which analogue RPG history has been lived, regulated, archived, obscured, and forgotten. The guiding question becomes deceptively simple: how have analogue RPGs been played in and around particular educational institutions over time? From that question follow others about when clubs formed, who initiated them, whether they were formal societies or informal lunch groups, which staff or student leaders supported them, and how parent concerns, timetables, room availability, transport, or moral anxieties affected participation.

This approach opens a rich but uneven archive. Students may locate school magazines, yearbooks, campus newspapers, society records, club constitutions, posters, newsletters, photographs, and event notices. Surviving campaign materials, scenario folders, maps, miniatures, figurines, costumes, painted dioramas, score sheets, and correspondence may reveal what kinds of play occurred and how groups understood themselves. Oral histories can record not only what was played, but where, by whom, under what constraints, and with what meanings attached (National Library of Australia 2021; National Library of Australia 2026).

The learning goal determines the source question. If the learning goal is evidence, students ask what source survives, who produced it, and what it makes visible. If the learning goal is perspective, they ask whose experience is represented and whose is absent. If the learning goal is contestability, they ask how an oral recollection, school record, game artefact, and public media representation might conflict. If the learning goal is significance, they ask why a short-lived school club might matter historically even if it left few traces. If the learning goal is continuity and change, they ask how practices, rules, spaces, genres, and institutional attitudes shifted over time.

Three brief examples show how this remains critically historiographical rather than merely documentary. A school magazine notice or yearbook photograph may establish that a role-playing group existed, but it also raises questions about institutional recognition. A campaign folder, annotated map, character sheet, or hand-produced scenario may preserve evidence of play that no official institutional source records, revealing genre preference, literacy practices, house rules, artistic labour, and local adaptation. Oral testimony from a former player, teacher, organiser, or parent can recover social meanings that objects alone rarely disclose. None of these sources can be read innocently. Each must be analysed for survival, absence, mediation, and later interpretation.

The examples used here are illustrative and methodological rather than reports of formal human-participant research. They do not present identifiable student work or interview data. Future inquiry involving interviews with former students, teachers, players, parents, organisers, or community members would require institutional ethics approval and informed consent.

7. Community Formation, Dissolution, and Contestation

If schools and universities provide micro-level sites of inquiry, broader national analogue RPG history offers a meso-level view of how communities define themselves and remember their pasts. Convention scenes, gaming magazines, hobby stores, and local club networks all helped shape what counted as innovation, seriousness, legitimacy, and belonging. Conventions, clubs, magazines, and local organisational forms contributed to a distinctive trajectory that cannot be reduced to imported

mainstream gaming narratives. Such material is especially useful because it shows how communities construct their own histories while competing over lineages, priorities, and definitions of role-playing.

Convention reports and gaming magazines are revealing here. They do not simply document events. They evaluate, rank, celebrate, exclude, and narrate scenes into being. A magazine editor deciding which systems or con styles deserve extended coverage is helping to shape future memory. Convention reports that frame a particular format as innovative, mature, or authentically local are participating in the formation of the canon. Students can read these texts as active interventions rather than neutral records. Doing so helps them see how historical discourse is produced within hobby communities themselves.

Community contestation also appears through genre differentiation. Fantasy, horror, science fiction, espionage, freeform, and convention-specific traditions often cultivate different values and different stories about where meaningful play resides. One community may remember tactical depth and campaign continuity as the hobby's core. Another may privilege improvisation, embodiment, costume, or social experimentation. A third may define innovation in opposition to imported norms. Historiographically, these differences matter because they show that analogue RPG history is not a single developmental road but a field of competing emphases and retrospective claims.

This is where oral history is especially powerful. Interviews with former organisers, players, and community members can reveal not only remembered facts but also divergent frameworks of significance. One organiser may view a university convention as a turning point in the formation of the regional scene. Another may dismiss it as marginal compared with school-based clubs or informal home campaigns. A parent may recall local panic over role-playing, while former players remember a sense of refuge, belonging, or creative experimentation. None of these testimonies should be taken uncritically, but their differences are historiographically productive. They expose the politics of memory at work within local play cultures.

8. Artefacts, Oral Histories, and Micro-historical Reconstruction

One reason analogue RPG history is so suitable for historical inquiry is the extraordinary diversity of its surviving artefacts. Textual sources may include rulebooks, zines, house rules, convention booklets, campaign notes, school newsletters, society minutes, letters, and magazine reviews. Visual and material sources may include maps, figurines, miniatures, dioramas, painted scenery, costume sketches, photographs, posters, logos, club badges, and annotated character sheets. These sources demand different methods. A campaign diary raises different questions from a yearbook photograph. A gaming convention programme performs different historical work from a box of painted miniatures. Precisely because the materials vary so widely, they help learners practise source criticism in concrete form.

Artefact analysis is particularly important because it prevents analogue RPG history from collapsing into a purely textual or retrospective exercise. Material traces show how communities invested time, craft, and meaning in play. A heavily annotated map may reveal the accumulated life of a campaign over months or years. A diorama built for a university event may indicate collaborative labour, available resources, and aesthetic priorities. Hand-made figurines or terrain may show what was inaccessible commercially and had to be produced locally. These objects are not ornamental supplements to written history. They are evidence of practice, resourcefulness, taste, and institutional support.

Oral history deepens this work by recovering dimensions of gaming life that objects alone rarely disclose: the emotional atmosphere of a club, the tension around moral suspicion, the social hierarchies inside groups, the role of teachers or lecturers, the importance of transport and family permission, the gendered distribution of space, the reasons a campus society split, or the private meanings attached to campaigns and characters. Oral history is useful here because it reminds researchers to treat interviews as historically situated accounts rather than as unmediated fact (National Library of Australia 2021; National Library of Australia 2026). Memories of analogue play are shaped by later nostalgia, embarrassment, justification, and media influence. That does not reduce their value. It defines the terms on which they must be analysed.

Microhistory offers an especially productive frame. Rather than attempting to narrate all analogue RPG development in a single line, researchers can reconstruct one school club, one campus society, one convention controversy, one magazine run, or one campaign archive. Such bounded cases are manageable for students and analytically rich because they reveal larger structures through local detail. A single folder of scenarios, when set against interviews and institutional traces, may illuminate genre preferences, reading habits, design influences, and the labour of amateur publication. A short-lived university club might reveal how scene formation depended on residential culture, timetable flexibility, or access to space. Microhistory here is not an evasion of scale. It is a way of honouring the fragmentary and situated character of the archive.

9. Genre, Version, and Change over Time

Another major strength of analogue RPG history as a field of study lies in the traceability of change across versions, genres, and design traditions. Peterson's two major histories are helpful here because they show that role-playing was never a static form. The category itself was debated, and successive systems reconfigured the relationship among referee authority, character identity, narrative structure, and player expectations (Peterson 2012; Peterson 2022). Studying versions historically, therefore, means more than listing editions. It means examining how communities argued over what play should be.

Students might begin by comparing early and later editions of a game or by contrasting genres across periods. How do rules distribute authority between the referee and the player? What assumptions about realism, improvisation, violence, character psychology, or social interaction appear in different systems? How do horror, fantasy, espionage, or freeform traditions frame agency and atmosphere differently? Which genres became visible in school and university settings, and why? Such questions link textual analysis to institutional and cultural history. A system's presence in a school club may reflect what teachers tolerated, what books were available, what magazines circulated locally, or what parents found acceptable.

Version history also teaches students how retrospective ordering works. New editions are usually marketed as improvements, clarifications, or returns to roots. Fan communities often narrate them in similarly evaluative ways: simpler, richer, more authentic, too commercial, too narrative, too crunchy, more inclusive, less serious. Those judgments are themselves historical evidence. They show how communities build their own genealogies and canons. What matters historiographically is not deciding which edition is truly best but understanding how evaluative discourse turns versions into arguments about the hobby's past and future.

Playing older systems may have a limited place in this inquiry, but only when tightly framed. Guerty (2025) is right that games can be used as primary sources in higher-level history work, and university pedagogy shows that embodied or enacted exercises can sharpen reflection when paired with evidence and debriefing (Beidatsch and Broomhall 2010; Carnes 2014). Yet the present argument remains that enactment should be subordinate to analysis. A short comparative play exercise can help learners notice procedural assumptions, social roles, or genre expectations. It need not replace inquiry into the wider archive of publication, reception, memory, and institutional context.

10. School- and University-Based Inquiry as Historiographical Practice

A school- or university-based inquiry into analogue RPG history can be structured as a sequence of historiographical operations. It may begin with a public memory text such as *Stranger Things* (Duffer and Duffer 2016), but only if that text is treated as a mediated representation rather than as a historical baseline. Alternatively, it may begin with a local trace: a yearbook photograph, club poster, school magazine notice, campus newspaper item, convention programme, campaign folder, map, miniature, or rulebook. From there, students identify what the trace makes visible, what it leaves unknown, what further evidence would be needed, and which memories or institutions might confirm, complicate, or contest it.

The sequence proposed here begins with learning goals, not with the intrinsic value of RPG history. Students first need to understand the historical operation they are practising: evidence, perspective, interpretation, contestability, significance, continuity and change, or public memory critique. Only then should they select an RPG source or case. A yearbook photograph, convention programme, campaign map, oral testimony, or media representation becomes pedagogically meaningful when it is tied to a specific historical competency.

The inquiry can be organised around five tasks: locating a trace; describing its material and institutional context; comparing it with another source type; identifying absences and distortions; and constructing a bounded historical account that names its evidentiary limits. These operations make familiar historical work visible. Students compare oral testimony with documentary evidence, distinguish routine practice from exceptional survival, and evaluate how magazines or convention reports construct scenes rather than merely recording them.

This is especially valuable because it makes the politics of historical knowledge tangible. A school club that vanishes from the record when a teacher retires, a campus society remembered only through a single photograph, or a campaign archive preserved because a former student kept a binder all show that analogue RPG history depends on labour, chance, and later framing. The pedagogical value of the inquiry is real, but the deeper payoff is historiographical. Students see that histories of analogue play are constituted through archives, memories, and interpretive choices.

11. Conclusion

This paper began from an educational problem: students need research objects through which they can practise historical thinking and historiographical judgment without being given the past as a settled narrative. It has been argued that analogue role-playing game history is one such object because it is accessible, bounded, culturally resonant, and evidentially unstable. Investigations of school clubs, university societies, conventions, magazines, artefacts, and oral testimony reveal the processes through which analogue RPG histories are made: archival selection, uneven preservation, mediated recognition, nostalgic reframing, local contestation, and the gradual canonisation of some narratives over others. In this sense, schools and universities are not merely sites where the history of analogue RPGs may be taught. They are among the places where that history has been lived, transmitted, forgotten, and retrospectively reconstructed.

Reframing the topic in this way clarifies its significance. Rather than adding another developmental summary of games or genres, the paper proposes a method for writing analogue RPG history outward from fragility, locality, and contestation. School magazines, campus newspapers, parent recollections, teacher and lecturer interviews, campaign folders, figurines, maps, convention reports, and gaming magazines matter because they widen the archive and unsettle inherited hierarchies of evidence. They show that the history of analogue RPGs is not fully contained within commercial publication lines or official scene narratives. Just as importantly, the bridge between school and university history studies shows that this field can sustain inquiry from secondary classrooms to tertiary seminars without losing conceptual rigour.

Stranger Things (Duffer and Duffer 2016) sharpens that insight by demonstrating how public memory organises recognition. Set against oral histories and local artefacts, it becomes possible to see not only whether a media image is accurate but also how it shapes historical expectations, nostalgia, and the search for authenticity (McCarthy 2019). That is the broader conceptualisation, to treat analogue RPG history not as a settled record awaiting retrieval, but as a dynamic field of production in which archives, communities, media, institutions, and later interpreters all participate. The educational implications remain important at the school and university levels alike, but they follow from a prior historiographical insight: histories of analogue play are always made through acts of selection, mediation, and framing as much as through the events they claim to describe.

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