

History of the Book: The Game

Play Test Feedback

April 15, 2016

- Need to limit events/books cards from players not in the game
- Wasn't clear that you buy books after a turn (check order of operations)
- No one had money to buy books at the first round
- Add more chance cards
- Discard chance after using?
- Settle debt at the end of the turn so it's not too distracting at each person
- Use +/- rather than *
- Make – tokens to track debt easily rather than using a banker
- When another player not present during a war, credits go to the bank (clarify)
- Note to self: within winning collections there can be varying prices so not all collections =
- Streamline the debt process: use debt tokens, debtor chooses what they will offer up, debt owner can accept what they get paid
- Make more chances trigger events
- Like the idea of the master century card (proposed in past play test but not completed yet)
- See this as okay for 5th grade and up, depending what emphasized
- Test with kids, Western Civ classes (recruit for this fall/spring?), test with gamers
- Similar to game Flux

March 8, 2016 [from Email from Katie Hassman]

- ~~While not entirely necessary, you might think of instructing players to do things like:~~
- ~~Turn over book decks as they become available so that it is clear when books are in the market. This means turning over book decks at the turn of each century. Simple, but sometime clear instructions help.~~
- ~~Discard individual country event cards somewhere. It was unclear what to do with event cards after they were turned. Again, a very simple task that players would probably figure out, but instructions might help. You might also think about creating a board for each country with slots that indicate where to place each country's event cards, perhaps an event card discard pile, a place for books (you could design the book slots in a way that communicates the three different objectives — perhaps using different colors as channels indicating different objectives — and provide information about how to indicate when a collection becomes locked, if you go that route). You could also include information about what to do each round and other rules and information that are pertinent throughout game play but perhaps difficult to internalize after only playing a few rounds.~~
- ~~Currently the instructions guide players to draw an event card after rolling, receiving credits and buying books. Essentially this is a two part turn. However, yesterday, some of us rolled, then drew the event cards, then bought books. Is there any reason you wouldn't want to do the later — that is that you wouldn't want to pick up the event card after rolling but before buying books?~~

I think if you want people to have a two-part turn with two opportunities for purchasing than it'd be good just to require that you purchase books (or choose to not purchase) before turning the event card.

- When you left the room to heat up your lunch John and I demoed an attack and we weren't quite sure how to reconcile the play based on the chance card we drew. So I chose to attack John and he drew a Discovery Chance card. In this case, would John get the discovery? Would I get the discovery? This wasn't entirely clear in the instructions.

March 8, 2016 [from Email from Margaret Gamm]

- Event cards either: adding or taking away multiple credits (I'm not talking excessive. Maybe one card per century adds or takes 2 credits for events with serious impact); or, events that require you to draw a chance card. Events in history could have various effects on a library. Example: Anne Boleyn gets her head chopped off, so the books in her library are gifted to the national library. The War of the Roses might result in the creation of a new library or the burning of another. [creation of auction deck]
- Roll the die at beginning of play. Highest number gets to be Germany, rest of players are determined by moving clockwise from Germany.
- I'd call whoever is Italy "the Medici" rather than just "the banker," then throw in a little history quip about Medici banking and their sponsorship of the arts. [skipping bank for now]
- This was mentioned at some point, but pronunciations (of people and titles) should be listed on the cards. Otherwise, people are embarrassed when they have to say them out loud. Added benefit of learning Latin pronunciations! [Waiting on this]
- Add some more background to the event cards. People playing this game are here for the historical tidbits.
- To get more events/chance cards in circulation, perhaps a single credit could be traded for an event card (only once per turn). With four cards, this should work out evenly. If some event cards send you to chance, this has the added effect of more shifting in the game. If you get to know your country, you'll also want to do this on the round you know would be most beneficial to you. This mechanism might be good or it might kill it, hard to know without trying it out. [Waiting on this]
- The "locking" mechanism works like Quidditch: just because you catch the snitch doesn't mean you win. At the end, what matters is your total number of points (credits). I would say that collecting a national canon, a collection specialty, or MVBs would add... 5 credits to your score? Each? In addition to "closing" the collection.
- You could add levels of difficulty for different levels of players (high school v. undergrad, or experienced player v. unexperienced). I'm still thinking out how to do this... in Pandemic, you add in more Epidemic cards, meaning that there are essentially more fires to put out, more frequently. It's very useful for adjusting the game level as you get better at it. [later date]
- There needs to be some sort of IOU for debts that can't be cleared right away. I feel like there should be a cute way of doing this, but I'm not coming up with anything right now. Perhaps each edition of the game has a little receipt book like people used to keep at the end of each "transaction" you strike a line through it. I don't know... [Cute idea, later date]

- Perhaps the end of game triggers an “Auction” round for three randomly selected books, starting at one credit each (regardless of book cost). That might make people more selective in what they buy near the end of game and encourage them to “balance their budgets”——□. Any unused credits just *poof* disappear. Books might be selected from a separate Auction deck of book cards that do not appear elsewhere in the game, which would keep the game a little different each time you play.
- There could also be “Estate Sales” of one-3 books (same mechanism as the “Auction”) throughout the game, triggered by chance cards. This could keep things moving. [Just do Auction]

March 8, 2016 with Alonso Avila and Cathy Cranston

Comments written during game

- Some events need more impact on other countries: for example, slavery (go back and recalculate international impact of all history cards)
- History cards award credits based on absolute power, not ethical views (go back and recalculate to make sure this is shown)
- There’s a dupe in 17th century France [corrected when game redone]
- Inquisition ends needs to be a minus? [no other Inquisitions -]
- As history cards get used, they create a timeline of a country (use for curricula?)
- Need more history cards that throw books out of the market (not just +/- credits) [Changed enough, see how this works]
- Think about which country starts more (what if no one is Germany?)
- Discussion prompt THEN play for class
- Have students write up events after, do research?
- Watch the movie: The Mission (1996) [will do later]
- Curricula could include: readings, but also films, music, etc. (broad liberal arts)
- Option to build out: who are you within the country
- National boundary maps through time (have students define how this game is anachronistic by creating boards for the game, one for each century, with the borders defined): students could then be “unified” and then play as teams
- Similar game: Axis and Allies [Noted]
- Talk to Thor Rollins: designs his own games, might be interested in playing [Follow up later]
- Have students find a source on the event (basic library skills test) — primary/secondary
- Like Pandemic, consider doing a rule book which creates different levels of difficulty by changing value over time [tabling this for now; too complex]
- History card could prompt increased value of certain books (genre/country) [too hard to track]
- Specific books or events could trigger other benefits [events trigger auction]
- Ask Greg to demo the game in his fall class, The Coming of the Book (SLIS) [ask later]
- Booster packs could include popular genres such as: comic books, popular books, children’s books, reflecting on cultural value over time [have students create these types of boosters]

March 8, 2016 with Katie Hassman, Jacque Roethler, John Fifield, Margaret Gamm, Jennifer Masada, Lindsay Moen

Comments written during game

- Tell them to put events face down
- Put in the rules that the century is on the back of the card, to put the books per century in a circle, and that the bag has both the credits and the dice
- Consider having a marker to state order [Went with dice roll to determine Germany, then go in order clockwise]
- Quick play still slow when figuring out the game
- Are there enough books for all options (like if all people roll 5s)? [Not going to worry about this]
- How do you track being in debt? [Wound up going with Italy as banker idea]
- All players need copies of the rules or a little card with instructions on it
- Appoint a banker at the start of the game (they can be the medici) [Try without this, added note that players should take notes]
- The card to follow instructions: Order of Operations (number)
- Need the objectives in front of you?
- Consider changing +/- events to number of * to reflect credit [no, looks too complicated?]
- Need to make it clear how to discard events
- Need to create an initiative to favor dealing with each other rather than putting things on the market (maybe full value to each other vs. less to market? Too complex?) [+/- events go to each other forgot to make them do that]
- Get — credits from another country
- This is teaching the principles of book history
- Similar games to play: Pandemic, Settlers of Catan, Liebrary, Balderdash, Risk, Ticket to Ride [Nice to note]
- Need a pronunciation key on each book card [Wait on this until later draft, too complex]
- Have players “lock” collections: so compete to create as many collections as possible by the end of the twentieth century
- What about having national treasures at start that give you credit at the beginning? [Not doing now]
- Curricula idea: have students create chart to try to map relative power of countries
- Add more historical information to events card. Bold the basic part for a quick read. [leave for later?]
- Redo set up diagram (make full page?)

February 2, 2016 with Alonso Avila and Lisa Gardinier

Framework

- Lisa as Americas, Alonso as Spain, myself as Germany.
- Played two rounds for 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th century and then one combined 19-20th century.
- Took around two hours.
- Could have won by the 17th century.

Gameplay (Amy's Response to Lisa's Notes)

- The events cards bother me. I think it does need to be correlated to the country; I kept getting confused when I pulled a country that wasn't me even though I designed the dang thing. It makes me think more about how the set up for each player should be designed though. That would control for not including countries that aren't playing. It would mean taking away the 'double if it's you' concept, but then again, I could revise them so that more cards for each country also have an effect on other countries. And I completely forgot my idea that when one country benefits, that country gets the credits/books, not the market. So it's more zero-sum like real war/colonization.
- Love the unique handicap idea as the Americas in the 15th century is a problem, that also could be a way to tilt the game through time. It also plays into the change in events cards.
- The war as a chance event brings it out of the history card framework and into an attack strategy. That'll work better than the educational challenge, which I find nerdy awesome but it is showing itself to be completely unworkable. I think it's fine to have two types of wars, one historical and one attack.
- The end game stuff is important as I hadn't given that enough thought. Gets complicated; I'd thought it would be more straightforward. But then again both times I've played it through it's artificial as the game would have ended sooner. I wonder how this will be effected with different chance/events opportunities.
- BUT love the quick play vs. regular play options. You are the bomb. Yes. Yes.
- I talked to Jennifer Masada a few weeks ago about the web based version. I do want to sell it, haha, but unfortunately I don't think I'd be the recipient of the money. But I think it could eventually be digital so that other schools could participate and/or the website for the game would have print card options that schools could fill in with their own content.

Gameplay (Lisa's Notes)

- Pull the event card after you roll dice or before you end your turn, instead of as a separate round. No event card for rolling 6? On one hand, I like the idea of leaving all country cards in at random, to get a fuller context. And keeps set-up simpler. On the other hand, maybe take out whichever countries are not playing. Is that problematic for +/- cards? I would still shuffle all represented cards to keep things a bit more random, and maintain the chance of the double +/-.
- Each country has a unique handicap/advantage? The Americas doesn't play the 15th but doubles their roll in the 20th? (Ow, two chance cards?!) Spain doubles in the 16th but skips 19th (or just pulls a chance card?). Germany starts with the Gutenberg but must give one book at random to a player [which?] at the end of the 20th?
- Make war a chance event? Three varieties:
 - War: Victory! Attack an opponent of your choice. Take their cash or three books of your choice.
 - War: Defeat! The opponent to your left has defeated you at war and can take either your cash or three books of their choice.
 - War: Battle! You go to war with the opponent on your right. Roll the dice, the highest number is victorious and plunders half of their opponent's cash and books.
 - Or variation thereof.
- For games played to the end of the 20th, what about players who have gathered multiple canons/specialties (and the MVB?). Market value of books, with +5 for each collection

achievement? +10 for MVB? Add eras/centuries as a collection achievement? At the end of game play, starting with the most wealthy country (cash + market value) and moving in the direction of game play, each player has one last chance to buy/exchange on the market or private deals to make their best final collection.

- Variations:
 - Quick play: Play one round of each century. Win by first collection achievement or most market value at the end of the 20th.
 - Long play: Play two rounds of each century. Win by market value + collection achievement bonuses at the end of the 20th.
- Long-term idea: If you can develop a web-based version, that could open it up to crowd-sourcing expansion packs and collections. Unless you want to sell this to a German tablegame designer. □
- Eventual test audiences: Ask Greg if the Olsons (other students?) can do a test round on the clock or if he'd buy lunch for a group of SLIS or other grad students. (I can suggest a few from Spanish.)

Gameplay (Amy's Initial Notes)

- Can get change from the market (EX: you go in debt by 3, and have a 5 star book, can trade with another or the market and get two points back).
- If you are in debt, you can buy yourself out with another player, not just the market; of course, that means the other player can give you a less than favorable deal!
- Pass book stack from player to player with the dice (otherwise gets too unwieldy); alternative that I did with Muzel, but not Alonso/Lisa, is to have the decks laid out by century and then turn them over as we progress.
- For the stealing chance card, you have to turn your cards face down, fan them out, and have another player choose at random which cards to "steal" that go off the market. (Although this does mean that the cards might need to have neutral backsides) Otherwise, people choose their least valuable books to discard.
- Still unsure about history cards: working with the +/- applying double to you if it is your country and normal value if you are not that country, but it feels weird to pull unrelated country's cards. Perhaps consider only having history cards related to your country (and given to you at the start of the game) that way it correlates to relative national power over time.
- Still unsure about whether a relative power chart/board should be made for the game.
- Realign national power ratios so that some countries share a century (Italy/Spain for example) and perhaps some centuries have no leader?
- FORGOT: IF IN A WAR, HAVE TO GIVE CARDS/CREDITS TO THE PLAYER REPRESENTING THAT COUNTRY NOT TO THE MARKET.
- What if wars meant that the person to the left got to choose three books of yours (chosen at random) or all your credits?
- What do you do with your final credits at the end of the game? Do you keep it and it weighs the same as a book? Do you buy out the market of any remaining books you want? If so, then do players take turns (most wealthy country first)?
- One round per century, this goes too slowly for most classes (although depends on how much thinking the players do).
- Need more chance cards, more positive especially. Recruit ideas?

Mistakes

- Fix the history card for the Spanish Armada: should be Spain, not France, as –
- Make disaster last three cards (too harsh)

January 24, 2016 with Muzel Chen

Framework

- Both Muzel and I played as two people each.
- Hard to remember what country you are, need a token?
- If that token was on the board, maybe it can move up and down the power chart.

Gameplay

- ~~Need more ability to attack as it's too easy to accrue collections/credits.~~
- ~~If lose educational challenge, you have to pay the cost of the book in credits or in books (can go in debt).~~
- ~~Can choose not to do anything in a round (save credits).~~
- ~~Minimum 3, maximum 6 players.~~
- ~~Number of rounds in the same century is number of players in the game divided in half (and rounded down if need be).~~
- Present to faculty as: play generic game to get the concept, a project to design game boosters, then play again to test knowledge gained during the research and development of boosters.
- Add new rules, then print. Make into a little brochure.
- What about illustrations to help portray concepts?
- ~~Order: the same order as the emphasis of each century (power ratio).~~

History Cards

- ~~Need to add new cards to the timeline.~~
- ~~Then print the cards to put in the slips.~~
- ~~If you pull the country you represent, the repercussions are times two (doubly better or worse).~~
- ~~Events cards should stay weighed one +/-, but wars should be 2+ for the victor and 2- for the loser if both countries represented in the game (loser gives credits to the winner; if not enough credits, must give them in subsequent rounds until clear of debt). If internal fighting, can be minus 2 from the same country!~~
- Not going through enough of these cards: think about as a way to fix.

Book Cards

- ~~Can buy more than one book per turn.~~
- ~~Fix ? mark costs (perhaps just ascribe them one * or find a new option).~~
- ~~Check number books in each genre, put this in the catalog.~~
- ~~OK to have non-winning genres.~~
- ~~OK to collect countries that are not your own.~~

- Organize catalog according to same order as events cards. (Lower priority: not yet)
- Create section of catalog dedicated to outlining the winning strategies.
- Problem: duplicate book in 15th/16th century Spain: Reglas de ortografía and gramática de la lengua castellana (choose new book).
- Have to read book title out loud when you purchase it so that others know what you have.
- Mock up card design to show: country, genre, MVB status, and century. (Commission student)
- Delete value of book, place that on the spreadsheet.
- Should books be able to have more than genre? Perhaps, occasional ones can be wild cards. (No)
- Literature genre needs to be more granular depending on how many they are when I count: split into poetry, prose, plays.
- Win by getting a national canon that is one book for each century? But then what if the game ends early. Think about this.
- Only four facts should be on the card.
- Reprint book cards.
- **Print off catalog as a little brochure.**
- Shorten importance. Muzel wondered if importance too hard/relative.
- No 1400s America; 3 1800s England??

Chance Cards

- ~~Revise chance cards and then format for slips.~~
- ~~Like God cards.~~
- ~~Rename? Think about this.~~
- ~~Sell to private buyer.~~
- ~~Way to get books permanently out of the game.~~
- ~~Can have a player attack you by buying you a chance card (they spend 6 credits or an equivalent amount of books) but can backfire as some chances are good.~~
- ~~They can also buy themselves a chance card.~~
- ~~Print off chance as a little brochure.~~

Board

- Place the timeline on the board with relative weights of each country per century.
- This could be a power chart that also lets players move from century to century together.
- Then would need a piece (like chess piece) representing each player.
- Illustrations from seminal moments in history (reformation, printing press, colonization, American pop culture, war).
- I make the mock up of the board. Then have classes compete with proposals to create the design. Get funding to reward winning designer (grant?) to commission them with the project.

Boxes

- ~~Make dividers for each century.~~

Curricula

- ~~Write out what would be required to make a booster pack, including projected amount of in class/out of class time.~~
- ~~Create discussion guide based on relative decisions (for example, +/- on history cards)~~
- ~~Update curricula for full-length class (mine) and show as example.~~

Outreach

- Once these changes are made, schedule meeting with: Jennifer, Greg, Carmelita, Paul.