

LOVE IS A GAME!

A TAXONOMY AND REPOSITORY OF DATING GAMES

What are dating games?

Dating games are interactive electronic games in which relationship-building is the main focus and primary mechanic of the game. These games encourage players to explore the in-game universe through the creation of emotional connections and make choices that impact the progression and ending of the game.

Why organize dating games?

Dating games touch upon complex themes such as successfully navigating relationships, achieving healthy emotional intimacy, and exploring gender and sexual identity. However, dating games are typically not categorized in great detail, making it difficult for users to explore nuances within the genre. Our taxonomy aims to reflect gamers' information needs, as well as define and specify tropes and mechanics that are largely unique to the genre. The taxonomy can be used for game companies to categorize these games, or adapted as a player resource.

Our Process



Step 1. Build a taxonomy

Based on the Video Game Metadata Schema (VGMS), we built an "expansion pack" geared specifically towards dating game mechanics and tropes.



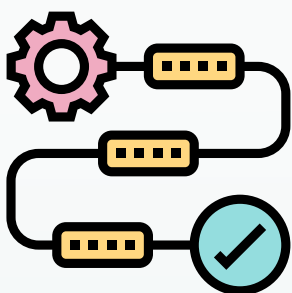
Step 2. Test the taxonomy

We played a variety of dating games from both Japanese and Western game developers, and tested them against the taxonomy while keeping detailed notes.



Step 3. Interview users

We interviewed dating game players to gain insight into their information behavior when choosing dating games. Interview questions covered topics such as appealing and unappealing elements of romanceable characters, search terms and tags in video game search engines, and representations of different identities.



Step 4. Iterate the taxonomy

After gathering feedback from taxonomy experts, we adjusted the taxonomy from its original form. Major adjustments involved the specificity of sexual orientation categories, and the addition of content warnings.



Step 5. Build a repository

Using the Dating Games Expansion Pack and information synthesized from our user interviews, we created an online repository using Tru Collector. The repository includes tags drawn from our taxonomy, as well as a form that allows repository users to suggest tags for certain games.



Repository can be found at:
jchern.ds.lib.uw.edu/datinggames/



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