

Press Start 2: Embracing the Absurd-Games, Law and Creativity in Conversation

Posted on: Wednesday, June 15, 2022 By Admin



Home » Blog » Press Start 2: Embracing the Absurd-Games, Law and Creativity in Conversation

Blog post by [Ruiyu Xu](#) and [Jianchang Feng](#), PhD Candidates at CREATE, University of Glasgow

On 16 May 2022, Bath Spa University hosted **Press Start 2: Embracing the Absurd** a one-day conference on video games, law, technology, and digital culture. Through workshops, lightning talks, demo presentations, and a book launch and discussion, the event brought together academics and industry participants to discuss emerging legal and social challenges surrounding artificial intelligence, platform governance, fan and creative labour, user-generated content, and the regulation of contemporary game ecosystems. The event was sponsored by Bath Spa University, CREATE and Lewis, Stone LLP.

The conference opened with a talk on *Embracing the Absurd*, followed by a *Diverse Games Law* workshop led by Dr [Angeal Felixus](#) (University of Glasgow), Dr [Maria O'Brien](#) (University of Glasgow), Dr [Amy Thomas](#) (University of Glasgow), and Dr [Deena Suler-Dudel](#) (Bath Spa University).



Diverse Games Law workshop in session. From left to right: Dr Amy Thomas (University of Glasgow), Dr Angeal Felixus (University of Glasgow), Dr Maria O'Brien (University of Glasgow), and Dr Deena Suler-Dudel (Bath Spa University) leading discussion with participants. Photo by Wrenn T.

During the open talk on *Embracing the Absurd*, Dr Deena Suler-Dudel argued that, in a period of rapid technological development, it remains unclear whether academic discussions can meaningfully influence legislation. Nevertheless, the process of searching for solutions still carries value. Rather than striving for definitive solutions or clear policy answers, the workshop which followed encouraged participants to share ideas openly and engage in discussions on diversity "in" games, "of" games, and "through" games.

The discussion session adopted a brainstorming format and explored a wide range of themes and areas. Topics focused on modding, accessibility, labour conditions, and platform governance in games. Participants reflected on whether players should be permitted to modify games to improve accessibility, while also raising concerns about harmful or exclusionary uses of player-created content. Other conversations explored issues such as crash culture, labour exploitation, workforce diversity and authentic representation in games. Broader discussions connected monetisation, user-generated content, esports, gacha-gaming, and game streaming, highlighting the increasingly interconnected nature of contemporary game ecosystems.

The final open discussion focused primarily on labour, platform governance, and the increasingly blurred boundaries between games and social-media platforms. Participants expressed concerns about *cloud* labour, exploitative monetisation structures, grooming, and the effectiveness of cross-border enforcement against global gaming platforms. The discussion also reflected the growing regulatory responsibilities imposed on platforms through legal instruments such as the Online Safety Bill and the Digital Services Act (DSA).

At the **PhD lightning talk** session chaired by [Michael Yi](#), five early career researchers from the UK and Ireland presented projects exploring the interrelations between video games, law, creativity, labour, and digital governance.



Wrenn Yi (University of Glasgow) hosting the Lightning Talks session during the conference. Photo provided by Kristoffer Eriksson

[Jianchang Feng](#) (University of Glasgow) examined fan games and intellectual property law, focusing on the tensions between fan creators, rightsholders and players across copyright, trademark, and competition law. Using *Pokemon* *Generations* as an example, her project explores questions of user innovation, market substitution, and the legal uncertainties surrounding fan game creation and community practices.

[Eugene Walker](#) (The Irish Game Makers Association) examined the Irish games industry through its history, global position, policy support, and current challenges. His presentation discussed issues such as regional inequality, limited trust within the industry, and unclear role structures. It also highlighted possible opportunities for growth through tax incentives, competency frameworks, industry promotion, and closer collaboration between government, academia, and developers.

[Ruiyu Xu](#) (University of Glasgow) analysed the copyright protection of game interaction mechanics, analysing recent disputes involving games such as *Pokemon vs PokemonGo* and *Warcraft vs The World*. Her research questions whether rule-based interaction mechanics should receive copyright protection, and whether some form of IP negative space should be preserved in order to maintain creativity and competition.

[Oscar Verdore](#) (Plymouth University) considered whether existing copyright protection and DDC (user-generated content) regulation frameworks can be applied to future immersive environments. Focusing on game mods, his research examined how copyright law and EULA (End User License Agreement) currently regulate UGC, whether these approaches balance the interests of users, intermediaries, developers, and publishers, and what legal changes may be needed for future immersive digital spaces.

Finally, [Mengshu Zhang](#) (University of Glasgow) discussed fan creation in the Chinese *RENREN* UGC as a form of digital labour colonised by gift culture. Her presentation explored how fan art, fiction, videos, cosplay, and fan-made goods sustain game communities while generating promotional and long-term commercial value, arguing that current copyright frameworks often reinforce the exploitation and undervaluation of fan creators' labour.



Participants in the Lightning Talks session, from left to right: Oscar Verdore (Plymouth University), Eugene Walker (The Irish Game Makers Association), Ruiyu Xu (University of Glasgow), Jianchang Feng (University of Glasgow), and Mengshu Zhang (University of Glasgow). Photo by Wrenn T.

The next session was the playful and interactive lunch demonstration of *Cyberpunk Noodle Bar*, an experimental *AI* game demo by Prof. [Kristoffer Eriksson](#) and [Pablo Rodriguez Perez](#). It took place in the same space where delicious noodles had just been served, neatly blurring the line between fictional cyberpunk reality and the real dining setting.



Cyberpunk Noodle Bar game session featuring Pablo Rodriguez Perez and Kristoffer Eriksson (Bath University of Glasgow) presenting their work. Photo by Wrenn T.

The project explores how generative *AI* can be used to create conversational, semi-autonomous game characters with evolving personalities, memories and goals, where each character has distinct aims and ability metrics, and player input helps steer how these rapid developments towards their real goals. Rather than relying on scripted NPCs, the system allows characters to improvise dialogue and develop relationships dynamically. One character, inspired by Dr Deena Suler-Dudel, appears as a lawyer specialising in intellectual property disputes, yet secretly dreams of opening her own restaurant.

The discussion of this session focused on the broader implications of generative *AI* in games. All members raised concerns about moderation, harmful prompts, and the risks posed by unfettered open-source models generating explicit or inappropriate information. Consent and personality rights issues also came up, especially when *AI* characters are created using publicly accessible information. Commercial and labour issues, including copyright infringement, trademark sources, and the possible displacement of creative work, were also discussed. Like the conference itself, the session reflected both excitement about *AI*-driven games with concern about their legal, ethical, and social consequences.

Dr [Amy Thomas](#)' new book, *Copyright, Contract, and Video Games: Terms of Play*, was launched through a presentation and discussion moderated by Adrian Amoson-Glover (Ipsal) in conversation. Photo by Wrenn T.

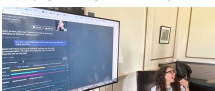


Book launch session with Amy Thomas (left) and Adrian Amoson-Glover (right) in conversation. Photo by Wrenn T.

Amy reflected on the challenges behind the project, including the selection of methodology, the construction of the dataset, differences between indie and AAA studios, and the influence of jurisdiction on drafting styles. Particularly interesting was the discussion of how EULA evolved over time. She emphasised that these agreements are being built that shift alongside other industry of broader concerns modding, streaming, and user-generated content, citing examples such as Nintendo's significant policy changes during the Covid-19 pandemic and Microsoft's evolving terms of use.

Building on this attention to language and discourse, the discussion further highlighted the striking variation in how different companies address players through EULAs. Independent developers were often described as adopting informal, humorous, and self-aware styles, with Microsoft, for instance, framing its terms in a conversational tone that openly acknowledges the opacity and unpopularity of legal agreements. Similarly, games such as *Deceive Me* and *Superhot* integrate contractual elements directly into a gameplay in playful and reflexive ways. In contrast, major publishers such as Nintendo tend to rely on highly formalised and restrictive legal language, particularly in relation to user-generated content. Nintendo emerged as a particularly complex case beyond the original dataset – a platform centred on user creativity, yet governed through tightly controlled contractual structures.

The final session centred on shaping future research agendas and sharing ongoing projects. Participants discussed the emergence of *AI*-driven games as sites of emotional attachment and potential emotional substitutes, raising questions about whether such relationships warrant legal protection. They also debated whether in-game behavioural data, including gameplay strategies and keypresses, should be treated as sensitive biometric data. The discussion further explored the intersection of experts and *AI*, particularly the complex copyright, personality, and data-related issues surrounding game replays, as well as whether player inputs might constitute forms of legal co-creation. Participants were also invited to engage with various publication opportunities, including submissions to the *CREATE* working paper series, the *International Entertainment Law Review*, and an upcoming edited volume stemming from the Diverse Games Law workshop.



Post-conference gathering where participants play Nintendo game together. Angeal Felixus is playing, while Dr Deena Suler-Dudel can be seen laughing the screen displays an *AI* agent character based on Dr Deena Suler-Dudel. Photo by Kristoffer Eriksson

Conclusion

In conclusion, *Press Start 2: Embracing the Absurd* highlighted the increasingly blurred boundaries between games, platforms, labour, creativity, and regulation. Discussions on platform governance, user-generated content, fan communities, generative *AI*, intellectual property, and evolving contractual practices reflected both excitement and uncertainty about the future of digital game cultures. Through workshops, presentations, demonstrations, and discussions, the conference further underscored the complexity of contemporary game ecosystems and the value of interdisciplinary approaches in understanding them. The conference also brought together academics and industry participants to exchange ideas from different professional perspectives. Although many participants recognised the difficulties of keeping law and regulation aligned with rapid technological change, the event also demonstrated the continuing value of critical discussion, interdisciplinary collaboration, and experimental thinking. In this sense, the conference fully embraced the "absurdity" of attempting to understand an industry that is constantly evolving.

[Many thanks to Dr Deena Suler-Dudel for organising the event, and to all session organisers, speakers, and participants for creating such a thoughtful and engaging space for discussion. It is hoped that these conversations will continue in future editions.]

[Artificial Intelligence](#) [Automation, Gamification and Platforms](#) [Creative Industries](#) [Digital Video Games](#)

[Law Innovation](#) [Online Platforms](#)

About The Author

Julia Liu is a PhD candidate at the CREATE Centre within the School of Law at the University of Glasgow. Her research interests primarily focus on video game governance, copyright law, and the IP's negative space. Additionally, she is interested in interactive art, media, and immersive-interactive installations.

Jonathan Ford is a PhD student at CREATE, University of Glasgow. Her research explores fan games, user creativity, and intellectual property in the video game industry, focusing on how copyright, trade mark, and competition law interact with community practices and emerging technologies such as generative AI.

About CREATE

CREATE is the Centre for Regulation of the Creative Economy. We are core funded by the AHRC as UK research infrastructure, with a focus on the regulation of creativity, technology and markets (intellectual property law, competition law, information and technology law). CREATE was established in 2013 as the UK Centre for Copyright and new business models in the creative economy (@copyrightcentre, funded by AHRC, EPSRC, ESRC).



CREATE

About Bath Spa University

Bath Spa University is where creative minds meet. We teach and research across art, sciences, education, social science, and business. The University employs outstanding creative professionals who support its aim to be a leading educational institution in creativity, culture and enterprise.



BATH SPA
UNIVERSITY