

APL Volumes

Season Two, Episode 2: WHAT'S IN A GAME?

This episode was transcribed by APL volunteer Martha Ladyman.

BEGIN TRANSCRIPT

LETICIA: Hey, y'all, welcome to Season Two of APL Volumes, Austin Public Library's podcast about all the cool things at the library and the staff who are passionate about them. I'm Leticia Leal, your host for this season and a Teen Program Specialist at APL Central Library.

The theme of this season is Everything but the Books, where we explore parts of APL's collection and programming that you might not expect to find at a library. This episode is all about board games, and I'm talking to Jace Furches, Youth Librarian at Pleasant Hill, and Tina Van Winkle, Adult Services Librarian at Central.

Let's get started!

MUSIC

LETICIA: We are talking about games. RPG's. Board games. Vidya games. Sorry I said vidya. That's from King of the Hill. I'm native Texan, so a little bit of Hank Hill always slips in. Vidya games. All sorts of games.

So what got you interested in gaming? What are your favorite kinds of games to play?

JACE: Wow. That's a big question.

LETICIA: That's a broad question.

JACE: Interested in games. It's hard. I was trying to think back. When did I start playing games? And I think I played games before I have memories of them. From a very young age...

LETICIA: Right from the womb.

JACE: Right from the womb was playing games. I do remember I got a NES from a pawn shop, and I was like, I would have been about six, and I got the *Super Mario Duck Hunt* combo and the gold case of the original *Legend Of Zelda*.

And then I spent a lot of my childhood indoors, both with my NES and then later with the Game Boy. And yeah, there were board games when I was a kid. I had a younger brother. We played games. I think I started making games with my toys at a pretty young age.

LETICIA: Making games, that's awesome.

JACE: Yeah. And that turned into, I had a cousin who introduced me to role-playing games. I was a pre-teen and I was like, oh my god.

LETICIA: Once that door is opened it's hard to shut.

JACE: We can tell stories with miniatures and roll dice! And so then all my action figures had to have numbers and stats. And we would like roll dice and play games with our toys. I do like rules and order, and when you are playing in a space and you have, "OK, here is the sandbox we are playing in." It's always really appealed to me in like the way my brain works.

LETICIA: Nice. That's amazing. And, Tina? What do you like about gaming? And what kind of gaming do you like to do the best?

TINA: Well, some of the things I like about it go back to my early memories of games. I like that it is exploratory. I like that it is playful. I like that it is a structured way to engage socially, which for somebody who has some social anxiety that can be really helpful. Especially as a kid.

Yeah, some of my early memories of games, we played a lot of word games and trivia games in my family. Lots of *Scrabble*. I still have the scorecard from the first time I beat my parents, which wasn't until I was maybe fifteen.

LETICIA: Did you manage to use the Q?

TINA: I don't think I used the Q in that game. The scorecard is bereft of narrative. I don't have the list of words I played. I just know that I beat them.

LETICIA: Yes, this is my triumphant moment and I'm going to save it forever.

And before we continue, we should What is your alignment?

JACE: I'm chaotic good, I would say. It's kind of where I lean.

TINA: So I will preface this by saying I don't play D&D. I don't play that kind of role-playing game. However, I'm definitely true evil.

LETICIA: I am chaotic neutral, because I like discord and chaos whether it be good or bad. I will sow it.

JACE: Perfect.

LETICIA: So what are some of the ways that you like to incorporate gaming into your work here at APL?

JACE: Yeah, so I started with APL about eight years ago. And I was working at a branch at the time. I had just gotten my library degree and was working at the circulation desk. And I had a manager who was really supportive of my interests. We had talked about, she knew that I was interested in board games.

And we started Board with Books at the Yarborough branch as an adult board gaming program. It would've been about seven years ago. We started pretty small. We had a collection of at first like ten, and then twenty and thirty games. It was difficult to build momentum. We'd have a couple of people show up or have kids show up.

And then we did start to have five or ten people show up. We'd be lucky if we got a couple of games going. But it was nice having people come into the library to play games.

And then about five years ago when the new Central Library opened I got a job as a reference librarian and moved here. In anticipation of the library opening we started building a collection of games for this library. Leading up to the pandemic we grew the program from ten or fifteen people to where we would have forty or fifty people coming to the library on the sixth floor playing games and facilitating games.

I have since become a Youth Librarian at a branch. Games and play really appeal to me. Working with children was a natural way to do that even more. I work at the Pleasant Hill branch down south, and we have family board game nights. We have open play. We have Nintendo Switches and video games. We're having a *Super Mario* party this summer.

So I'm always looking for opportunities to bring gaming into our programs. Just getting people into the library who may not come in otherwise to know that the library has board games and role-playing books and people who care about games. It's a lovely way to get those folks into the library.

LETICIA: I somehow also tricked the system to be able to work with kids and teenagers and games. And we just did open free play games today and we had the PS4 out and the Switch. We played some *Super Smash Brothers*. And my main is Bayonetta, just so everybody knows.

Tina, you are carrying on the Board with Books here at Central.

TINA: Yeah. So I think one of the things that people found out very quickly when I started here was that I had an interest in board games. And I must have talked about my board game collection that I built at my previous job. And Maddy Newquist, host of season one of APL Volumes, invited me to start working with her and shepherding Central Library's board game collection and restarting the Board with Books events here.

It's a little odd to be on this podcast episode with the person who created this board game collection and the event.

LETICIA: A little starstruck. Both Maddy and Jace.

TINA: But just to say that I think my involvement with games here has really been to continue the work that others started. I don't feel that I have really reshaped the program in any way because it was strong and it had such great bones that I just got to enjoy bringing back this program to our customers.

The first Board with Books back in February, which was the first since the pandemic hit, was really successful. We had almost thirty people over the course of the night. We had a great group of volunteers. And you could really see it livening up this space up on the sixth floor again with this kind of program. It was really wonderful. And it's been great since then, too.

LETICIA: You've touched on this earlier how Board with Books in general is a great way for people to come out of their shell and meet new people. Have you seen that happening? Are you able to facilitate that?

TINA: Are you asking if there are any Board with Books babies on the way?

LAUGHTER

LETICIA: Yes.

TINA: One of the things that we talk with our volunteers about is not only being a games sommelier and matching people with games but also helping people who came to the event alone, helping pair them up with someone else and finding a game that the two of them will enjoy.

And I've seen some successful instances of that, which is nice to see. It's good to see people walk in as strangers and you leave them each other's names having yelled at them how they are a werewolf. And I've seen a few times, just working on an ordinary shift, I've seen people who seem to meet in front of the board game shelf and then go play a game. And that I think really speaks to this as a public space, as a third place where people can form those kinds of connections, even if they aren't going to be lasting ones. They are still being together in a public space and enjoying something that is about story-telling and games and fun.

LETICIA: I love that you use the term board games sommelier, like this game has notes of whimsy and adventure, and maybe you might get mad at each other later.

TINA: Exactly. And I think especially it can be hard for people to whom these games are new. It can be intimidating to walk up to this wall of new titles and figure out what you want to play. And so having me and Maddy or having the volunteers who are very skilled at game selection as well, to kind of guide you is part of the service that we can offer as Board with Books.

LETICIA: Oh, sure! I think the volunteers help me very much as I am a learn-as-you-play type of person. When someone reads the instructions to a game for me it sounds like GARBLED NOISES HERE. So I do not take in the information like that. But once we start playing, then I can figure out how to play.

What are some of the favorite games that you've seen people play?

JACE: Favorite games? Well, we used to have a group, and I was always surprised, *Secret Hitler* was a favorite.

LETICIA: I never heard of that game.

JACE: So it's a social deduction game like *Werewolf*.

LETICIA: And what is *Werewolf*?

TINA: It's a social deduction game, but basically it's a game in which you are trying to trick the other people playing. Everybody gets a role, and your role might be different. Your role is secret. So if I were the werewolf I might be trying to convince you the whole time that I'm not the werewolf.

LETICIA: Not the werewolf!

TINA: It's Jace!

LETICIA: And now *Secret Hitler*.

JACE: This is another version of that, where someone is secretly Hitler, and there are fascists and anti-fascists. It's not a personal favorite of mine. But we had a group of people who would come in twice a month. And we would set up two of the big tables on the sixth floor. And they would have games of like ten to fourteen people. And they would play it all night long. Over and over again. Week after week.

I like variety in my games. That's not really my jam. But it was lovely to see.

For me, when I hosted it, I certainly had a group of games that I like to teach people, preferably with rules that are on a page or two. I was mostly hosting, greeting people and setting people up with games.

There's a game called *Reef* that is pretty easy to learn.

LETICIA: Nice! I assume it's about coral reefs.

JACE: It's about coral reefs.

LETICIA: I do not know what other reefs there are.

JACE: I have a soft spot for abstract games with big chunky pieces. I like big primary colors. In *Reef* you stack little coral pieces.

LETICIA: That sounds fun.

JACE: I like games where on your turn you do this or you do that. And maybe there's some strategy once you feel it out. But I really love simple games with some medium-weight strategy.

LETICIA: Sometimes the overly complicated games, they can be pretty fun once you figure out and get into them. These hour-long games. So what happens when someone starts to game and they are not able to finish it. Does that happen often?

TINA: That has happened a couple of times since I've been here and we brought the program back.

LETICIA: Did they flip the table?

TINA: We give warnings. "Hey, y'all, we're going to have to close up in thirty minutes." And so you prepare people for it. And I also try to make sure people know, "Hey, if you start *Wingspan* and you never have played it before, you are not going to finish this game tonight. Come back and play it again a different time."

JACE: *Catan* is always one that people would show up, and they were really set on playing, and I'd be like, "You know, we're closing in forty-five minutes. I wouldn't recommend setting that up. If you want to take the time to put that up and then just break it down, you can do that, but...."

LETICIA: Y'all are mentioning games I've never heard of in my life. There are so many games out there. And there is independent gaming. And I remember talking to you that here in Austin there are a bunch of independent gaming companies.

TINA: Yeah, there are not only companies but people who are just independent board game designers.

LETICIA: Like Jace?

TINA: And they use Kickstarter or what have you to get their games going.

JACE: Before the pandemic for a couple of years we did International Games Day, which is an ALA-supported week-long event for supporting games in the library. One of my favorite memories of games in the library was one of our International Games Days. We had over 500 people in the library throughout the day on a Saturday playing games.

LETICIA: Wow, that's a lot of people.

JACE: We had multiple designers. Dan Manfredini, who made the game *Far Space Foundry* and a few other games. He was here demoing games. There's a local meet-up group, the Austin Board Game Designers and Playtesters. Anybody can join that meet-up. They came and showed some of their demos and played their games with the public.

We also had a massive game of *Werewolf* on the sixth floor with fifty people gathered around. I love seeing people play games in libraries even when it's not programming.

Something that I love: when we started the collection we weren't sure – is this collection going to be on the floor? Are people going to be able to be respectful of the games. And there was a lot of fear of that. For me it was, we buy books. Books get damaged. Things get lost. If a game gets destroyed, that's just part of it.

And what I've found consistently is that people treated the games with quite a bit of respect. There were certainly exceptions and things would get damaged. But for the most part having them out on the floor – not only were we not having to store them in the back, but it was like here's a resource that everybody can access. So for those longer games, we had a copy of *Scythe*, and there was a family who would come in here, and you would go to the corner of the library on the sixth floor and there would be people who would be playing this game for three hours. In the middle of the week, in the library. And that would always warm my heart.

LETICIA: I remember when I first started at APL, I started at Yarborough, and I was impressed by the sheer number of games that they just had available for people to use. They could just sign them out. And everyone was very respectful that all the pieces were there. It was very impressive because people want the pieces to be there so they can play. So I think they think about that.

TINA: And I think that just like Jace said, yeah, books get damaged, it happens. But actually I think that one of the things we know as librarians is that books get damaged in libraries a lot less than you would think. It's because people really value the materials that we are providing and for the most part take great care of them.

I know I was surprised when I was a middle and high school librarian that my twelve-year-old students who were not respectful to the books were so respectful once I started circulating board games. They brought things back, and they'd say, "Oh, we think we lost one of the rubber bands that was holding the cards together." And I was like, "Yeah, bro, that's cool. That's fine."

And so I think when you have something that people want and that they care about others getting access to, you are going to see really careful behavior. You will see people loving it and taking care of it.

LETICIA: So I can tell that y'all are really passionate about gaming. So how are you excited to see gaming grow within APL?

JACE: I'd love to see us circulate games. All of the collections that we've mentioned so far are in-library-use only. I have pushed from time to time. There are so many pieces that could go missing. There's the question of how do we check these when coming back in? And if they are floating? It has been a hurdle that is difficult to overcome. But there are libraries out there that do it, for folks who may not be able to, especially with the Central Library and the parking hurdles. And there are other things, people might not want to come downtown.

But being able to take something home and play it at home I think would be really lovely. And I think having video games to check out, I think it's really a shame that we don't do that. I know there have been other people who have. I try to make that happen but we haven't gotten there yet. That's another one of those things were, people want to play video games. We share media. Why aren't we checking those things out and sharing them?

And the last thing I'd like to see is more role-playing programming at the library. Whether it be for children, teens, or adults. We do have some, there was D&D 101, but before I left and before the pandemic I really wanted to take the Special Events Center on the first floor and have a special big event with lots of tables and volunteers being dungeon masters, where everybody runs the same adventure.

I have an outline for an adventure in which the party shows up, there's a wise and magical librarian who sends, and the game is set in a library and you are sent on a quest. The books are portals and you can go through the books and solve a little adventure that can kind of play in different ways. And everyone would be kind of playing the same story together to have this shared experience.

LETICIA: I want to go there. That sounds really fun. And it sounds like there is ample room for LARPing. I want to be the wizard librarian, the crone.

JACE: I think that's what we need.

LETICIA: I've got a crone deep inside of me that's ready to come out.

TINA: We all do.

LETICIA: What do you think, Tina? Any big plans?

TINA: Yeah, I would absolutely agree, I would love to see us circulate games. I think it is a huge thing that we can do to create more equity among people for whom a fifty-dollar board game is an extreme expense and they can't buy it. And maybe can't make it to Central or the branch location where the game they want to play is.

I hope that is the way we are moving. I know that there's been some efforts towards that and a lot of planning. And I also know that yeah, there are a lot of library systems that have figured out some of those hurdles and we can learn from them.

Another thing that I'd like to see, and Jace brought up playtesting, I would love to have us do a playtesting-focused Board with Books, where we have games that are still in development, and have an evening focused on getting the community to come in and not only play the games and give their feedback but to see what that process is like. Because it is not something you see every day. Just like many people don't know what goes into editing a book. They don't know what goes into the creation and testing and evaluation of a board game.

LETICIA: I guess they would need someone like me who is not well at following instructions. They need some beta tester who does not know how to do anything. And I could be of some help.

TINA: I was in a playtesting group once where, I can listen to instructions for a long time, but at some point I check out. And I was like, "No, I'm not going to listen to you read this thirty-page instruction manual." And then I did stop listening. And then I was playing the game wrong. And I got scolded so hard. And I was like, "This is going to happen. You are going to have to figure out how your players are going to adjust to it, or you are going to have to write a shorter manual."

LETICIA: I would like to note that there is not scolding at our APL board game activities.

JACE: No scolding allowed.

TINA: I have one more for future. One of my favorite forms of gaming that is less well known and less popular these days is interactive fiction. So imagine a choose your own adventure novel, but this is like an old, old text-based form of games and story-telling. There have been some incredible examples of it, those who are a little older than me might remember Zork. But there are ways to still play these games. And there are awards for the best interactive fiction yearly. And I think, this is not related to the board game collection of course, but I think it would be a fun crossover to do with our Write Club here at Central where they talk about writing fiction, to do some kind of bridge and talk about writing interactive fiction.

LETICIA: That would be great.

TINA: And it's a coding thing too. You have to code it.

LETICIA: STEM!

TINA: Yes! The Innovation Lab, the space that we are in.

LETICIA: I remember playing those text-based games. They're like, you enter a cavern. Do you want to go left or right?

TINA: You have to look at the wizard to figure out, what is he holding?

LETICIA: He has a candle in one hand and a saber in the other.

TINA: And a lot of them are really based on word play and puns and that makes me happy. That's a dream of mine.

LETICIA: What is one of the most unusual games that you've come across in your gaming experience?

JACE: I was thinking about, I think my favorite unusual game in the library collection, and this is a moment to highlight some of our adult role-playing games. We have a large collection. Everyone thinks of *Dungeons and Dragons*, and the library does have *Dungeons and Dragons* books.

But we set aside some funds to specifically purchase books that would appeal more to adults, more adult content. Like *Call of Cthulhu*, and some old Swedish games. I think one of the more strange and interesting ones that we have is called *The Chained Coffin*. It's a module for *Dungeon Crawl Classics*, which is a game that I like quite a bit. It has lots of old school art. And in this is a setting for a dark fantasy Appalachia. Appalachian folklore meets wizards and magic. The book is beautiful. It has like lovely cover art, written by Michael Curtis. And in the back of the book there is a dial, a three ring dial, for when you encounter a magical puzzle in the book, you open it up in the back and there is this multi ring dial, like a decoder. Which is pretty sweet.

LETICIA: We have that in our collection? Like I could go get it right now?

JACE: It's on the shelf on the sixth floor right now. I just checked before I came here.

TINA: Did you go, "I missed you, book"?

LETITICIA: Woah. Yeah, there is so many role-playing games that I've never heard of. I've never heard of any of these. Apparently I don't know anything about games. Just the basics. Just Monopoly.

TINA: One of the weirdest games I've seen, and I don't know what it is called, it was a game that my friend who is Austrian had brought home with him. And it was just a bunch of kitchen implements. It was a packaged game. Somebody created this, manufactured it and sold it. But in the box were various spatulas and things like that. And then I have to take his word for it because I don't read German, but he said the game is basically that you pass these around and imagine what they could be. And I was like this is what kids do. But somebody capitalized on it and turned it into an actual game that you can put on your shelf.

And I think that speaks to both the ridiculousness and wonderful imagination of game designers and gamers, that this is something that exists outside of the mind of a seven-year-old.

LETICIA: I do like games where you get to use your imagination like that. There is a popular game, *Dixit*, that is really fun, where you make up stories from the pictures. And there's a game that is called, it's from Discordianism, it's a Discordian game, and it's called *A Thousand Blank White Cards*. And you just have a thousand blank notecards and you pass them out to the people who are playing. And you can write whatever you want on there.

So you can just draw a picture. Or you can draw five more cards. Or draw a new card. Or drink this soda. Anything. I remember I played once and I just drew a person sitting crisscross applesauce. And I was like, "You have to talk to Dale. He's from Princeton." And the game really doesn't make any sense. And that's the point. It's just chaos.

You can write anything on it. But it's kind of fun to build up the collection of your blank cards. And then when you play with your friends next time people make more cards within the game. I haven't made it to a thousand cards yet. But I definitely do have blank cards at home, just in case anyone wants to play *A Thousand Blank White Cards*.

I like the creative things. I also like *Balderdash* a lot. Things where you get to make up lies.

TINA: Yeah, that's some of the things I like about games. You and I have talked about how I have a background in theater. Sanctioned lying is really fun for humans. It makes us feel like we are transgressing, but when you are doing it in these safe environments, it can be really cathartic and be like, "Yeah, ha, ha, I totally am a werewolf. And you believed me? What?" It allows people to kind of like play with these other sides of themselves that they don't get to experience very often.

JACE: And when you play with kids, and playing games with traitors or where there is allowed lying, I find it interesting that that they often have a really hard time with it. There is a game, *Sheriff of Nottingham*, where basically each round one player is the sheriff and everyone else has a little bag. And you are putting cards in your bag as you are going through the gate into Nottingham. And you say, "My bag has three chickens." Or "My bag has" And you have to bribe the sheriff. And the sheriff has to decide, "Do I look or do I not?"

And I've found when children play this they almost consistently tell the truth and they do pretty well at it. Sometimes just being honest is the way to go.

TINA: It's the best poker face. But yes, it's funny. I have two kids and they struggle with that game. But they love playing *Sorry*, which is just brutal. But it doesn't involve any lying. It just involves making sort of mean choices towards your brother. It's really interesting to watch that kind of developmental behavior, both in kids and also in adults, in how they respond to the scenarios that a game sets up and forces them to navigate.

Some people can't navigate them. It breaks their brain a little.

LETICIA: Yeah, and that must be an interesting dynamic to see people who are strangers coming in to the Board of Books to see how they are going to play. I played *Codenames* with some people I didn't know very well, and it was

interesting to see how they could read my brain waves, they could guess what words I had picked and why. It was like, "Wow! I bonded with these people so quickly because you had to guess what I was thinking."

JACE: Yeah, and then conversation opens up. Like Tina said, I also have some social anxiety. So I kind of get my early take on how I love games. And then as an adult I decided to stop drinking alcohol in my mid-twenties. And I hadn't done a whole lot of socializing without alcohol. And I had kind of pulled away from games, and then came back around to them. I was like, "Wow, I'd like to be around people." But just sitting around not having an activity was pretty hard.

And I found that I can sit around and pressure is relieved when I say, "OK, we can talk. There will be socializing happening." But we can also divert attention to this task that we are playing.

When I first got into games I used to select really heavy games, games with thirty, forty pages. I'm going to take a week to learn this game. I'm going to need other people to do some studying to learn it. And then we are going to be playing this all afternoon. I was really into games. Into the beauty of the systems. Gaming as an end in itself. And it checked boxes in my brain and made me happy.

And then I found, oh, wait a minute. I actually like these people that I am around. And I had this shift in gaming. It especially happened during the pandemic. Pre-pandemic, let's play heavy games. We're going to do this. And if we have fun socializing, that's like a secondary plus.

There was this shift during the pandemic. I did continue playing games online for awhile. There are several different platforms where you can play board games online. And it was something that kept me going.

LETICIA: What are some of those platforms?

JACE: So there's Board Game Arena, is one that I used quite a bit. You can make a free account and play most any of their games. Some of them do require that you pay. And there's Tabletopia. There's different software. Steam has some different platforms to use as well.

TINA: Yeah, there are a lot of add-on tools for Steam to help people play with one another.

LETICIA: I feel like I'm learning a lot about games I've never heard about. *Reef. Wingspan. Scythe.*

JACE: There are so many games. And with there being so many games, there are games to meet everybody's taste. What I found with my taste shifting was that I was really interested in being around people first and moving to games that, one, you can teach really quickly that are pretty lighthearted and funny. Social games. Party games. Card games that are less ... I want people to feel welcome and have fun right away. It does for a lot of people like yourself who don't learn rules through reading or hearing them. We can play like, "Hey, we're going to learn while we play this game. It takes fifteen minutes. If it goes poorly, we'll play again."

I think having that shift of being less interested in games as an end in themselves and more interested in games as one way of facilitating social interaction, particularly with people who have some challenges with socially interacting.

LETICIA: I think that's one of my favorite parts about gaming, too. So what is one of your favorite social games? What is an example that some people might like to play?

JACE: Let's see. Do you have any off the top of your head?

TINA: Well, again, I think there is something for every taste. I really like playing games like *Boggle* that are over in three minutes, each round is, and it gives you a lot of time to talk in between. I think I tend to enjoy hyper-focused, intense activity followed by a little bit of a free....

LETICIA: A little chatter.

TINA: Yeah, yeah. And some of the games that I really love don't translate well to groups of people who don't know each other well. *Mysterium* is one of my favorites. But it's like *Code Names* up to eleven, and if you don't have any prior knowledge of each other, if you don't have any inside jokes to draw on, it's really hard.

I also think *One Night Ultimate Werewolf* can be a good icebreaker game because it is very simple to learn, it doesn't take that long to play, but it kind of gets everybody's blood pumping because again you are deceiving others and you are trying to figure out who is in league with who. And it can help create group dynamics where there aren't any.

JACE: I think there are games like social deduction games with social in the name. But I think there are a lot of games that are good for social situations that are not necessarily focused on that. So I think card games are really good for that.

One of my favorite games of this year that I've played is called *Scout*. It's put out by a Japanese publisher named Oink. I love tiny games. I like to bicycle, and on my game night I like to have a big bag of games, but like a bunch of games in a small bag. This game is two inches by four inches.

TINA: That's a children's book right there.

JACE: I love that, I have a lot of tiny games. And in this game each player is basically a ringleader in a circus. And you have a hand of cards. And you can't move cards in your hand, which is kind of an interesting mechanic. Your hand is set, and you are displaying different, it's basically just playing groups of cards in sets to beat the players around you. It's simple, play a card or take a card. The game is over in twenty minutes. It's really lovely.

An older German card game that I love. It's called *Six Nimmt!* which means six take. And it's another simple card game. Rows go out. People play cards. You all play simultaneously with that. I love games that play a variety of players as well. *Six Nimmt!* can play somewhere between three and ten or twelve. And a small boxed game that can play ten or twelve people fluidly is my favorite thing.

LETICIA: So *Scout* is not about *To Kill A Mockingbird*? The trials of Scout.

JACE: If you are looking for a party game one of my favorites is called *Monikers*. It's a big box of cards with just a word on them, and a little description about the word. In this game players collectively build a deck of cards. And then as one player goes they flip a card. Basically in the first round you can say anything except for the name of the card. And everybody goes around and pays attention. And then on the second round you go back through the cards, but you can only use a single word. And on the third round you do charades.

So it's kind of escalating. And it's fun because you are building inside jokes at the table, which is another thing I love about gaming and role playing in particular. You are forming connections and building community and creatively telling stories. It's the same thing with social games like that. By the end of the night you've had these moments of joy and humor that you then can kind of take home with you.

LETICIA: One game that I found that is very fun for all ages to play and very easy to learn is Taco Cat Goat Cheese Pizza. Have you ever played that one?

JACE: I haven't.

TINA: I have not either.

LETICIA: Yes, it's a card game, and it's really easy. Each card has a picture of either a taco, cat, goat, cheese, or pizza.

TINA: Oh, goat and cheese are separate.

LETICIA: Yes, goat cheese pizza sounds delicious, but no they are separate. And yes, each card has a picture of them. And you just have to lay them down. And when you lay them down you have to say whatever is on your card. Oh, no, you have to say "Taco, cat, goat, cheese, pizza." And if it matches on the card you have to slap it.

So it gets kind of physical. I've played it with my parents and my son and my sister, so for older people and kids, and it was very easy to learn. Everyone always has a really fun time playing that. It's just really goofy.

There are other cards where you have to dothere's a narwhal card, where you have to make a horn instead, and then slap the card. Groundhog you have to hit the table or something. I don't remember all the rules, but that is a very fun and easy game for everyone to learn.

We can get it in the system!

JACE: Yeah! I love game that, I'm interested in small games that are designed for children but that have some adult appeal. Another one I love is called *Rhino Hero*. It's just a little deck of cards, and you are building a tower and putting the little rhino meeple on the tower. It's meant for kids but it's great for adults.

A lot of dexterity games are like that. Something like *Jenga*, but with an added twist. One of my recent favorites is called *Kabuto Sumo*. It's kind of like one of those coin games where you are pressing coins.

LETICIA: Oh yes, I always love those at the bowling alley.

JACE: But instead you've got wooden disks on a circle, and then each player has their wrestling beetle. And you are pressing disks trying to knock off the other beetles. This game is so precious.

LETICIA: That sounds really fun.

Well, I guess kind of to wrap things up, we've talked a lot and mentioned a lot about how games just make a connection for people, and I think that's what we are trying to do here at the library.

JACE: I miss being here at the Central Library and going to a different station and seeing somebody over in the corner playing a game or having Board with Books and seeing, like Tina mentioned, seeing people show up at the library kinda nervous and alone and being able to see them with somebody.

I don't know if there are any Board with Books babies but there was certainly some romance. I remember a guy came in, and I was trying to pair him with somebody else, and he was like, "I'm actually waiting for somebody else." Who he had met the previous week and they would just meet. I don't know whatever happened with them. But I could see them having their date at Board with Books.

TINA: If you are hearing this right now, please write in and tell us.

LETICIA: And we'll let you get married on the rooftop, at the rooftop garden.

JACE: And if you are someone else looking to have a fun date, I think the Central Library makes a lovely date spot. You want to come in and grab a board game on the fifth floor on the west side, grab a game, grab a table, play a game.

LETICIA: Take a stroll outside.

JACE: Let the love grow. Get on the rooftop garden, look at the river, play a game.

LETICIA: I'm Hitler, and I'm in love with you.

Tina, do you want to say any final thoughts?

TINA: Please come to Board with Books even if you are not looking for a romantic night. It's such good fun, whatever kinds of relationships you want to build or grow and discover.

Some of the things I love about libraries, that kind of limitless possibilities exists in games. We have games not only in our collection but in the world there are so many games on so many subjects. There are games for every circumstance. And it's really a joy to get to see people interact with our collection and get to enjoy the things that I enjoy or teach me something new about a game.

LETICIA: Well, thank you, Jace, and thank you, Tina. I feel like I really learned a lot. There are so many new games for me to play.

What was the name of that book again? With the dial in the back?

JACE: *Chained Coffin*.

LETICIA: *Chained Coffin*. Yes. How could I forget? That makes me feel like there's a vampire that's trying to get out. And it's chained for a reason. I love vampires.

JACE: The chains are on the coffin for a reason.

LETICIA: Yes, the chains are on the coffin. There are no chains on this library.

I'm sorry. I will not try to tie that in.

JACE: Library unchained.

LETICIA: Yes, library unchained. All the games that you can play.

Thank you again. This was so much fun.

MUSIC

LETICIA: Thanks for listening to this episode of APL Volumes, Season Two.

If you want to play some boardgames at APL, you can visit your local branches or the Central Library, fifth floor. And extra special thanks to my guests Jace Furches and Tina Van Winkle, for being so amazing and for playing along.

APL Volumes is recorded and produced in the Library's Innovation Lab, a part of our APL Innovate Digital Maker Space. Come visit the Maker Space at the Central Library and explore our recording equipment and hardware and all kinds of audiovisual software for 3D modeling, graphic design, animation, and more. Many thanks to the APL Innovate team for their help behind the scenes on this podcast.

A huge thank you to Christen Hong, our editor; Peter Hofstad for being our marketing captain; Michael Wheat for our insanely cool logo; and Stephen Plail for our jaunty theme song.

This podcast is all library, all the time. Our next episode will be about gardening.

Thanks for listening and supporting your local public library.

MUSIC

END TRANSCRIPT