

WTF?!?!?! (WHAT'S THAT FEATURE?)

PARADATA

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Brief Bio

Andrew Reinhard is an archaeology PhD student at the University of York interested in video game archaeology, specifically how games are artifacts and sites.

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Paradata

Being a digital person I wanted to create something that was the opposite, a game that had no digital footprint outside of the tools I used to design it. When I was in the field in Greece and Italy, I wanted to do something fun during cookie breaks, or to have a diversion with friends after supper. Ancient Corinth had its dice game. So why not cards? Why not . . . *archaeology* cards?

The theme of the 2017 Heritage Jam is “the bones of our past,” so I approached it through thinking of artifacts as the bones or human occupation, but also with cards as bones assembled into a deck for play. Some of the cards contain images of worked bone. When we play, we disarticulate the skeleton of the deck until it is no more, yet we have transformed it into something rich, meaningful and fun. Just like archaeology!

To produce the game, I first developed and wrote the rules, basing *WTF?!?!?!* on the mechanics and gameplay of *Dixit*, and on the fun real-world game we used to play in Greece: *WTF?!?!?!*. In this game, our excavation director would lead us around to various weird archaeological artifacts, point, and shout, “WTF?!?!?!” It was up to us to figure out the context and function of the thing. We had a blast doing it. I wanted to translate that kind of archaeological fun into a portable game, which could be instructive for creative archaeological thinking.

Once the mechanics and rules were done, I found a bunch of oddball artifact images online (which for this prototype should be classed as “fair use”), and dropped them into Adobe InDesign CS5 to create the initial deck of 84 cards. For the prototype, the actual identification of the artifacts has been removed, although I might add them back as a kind of answer key. But that’s beside the point. I made the game to encourage players to think both creatively and critically about what something might be (and why). This is as true for the player making up the story of their active card as it is for the other players who are deciding which description best fits the other cards on the table. Archaeology can be fun, and I hope players enjoy this game.

A PDF file of the cards along with the rules, tokens, and board will remain accessible by being hosted on my blog, archaeogaming.com. Because the game is CC0, I would encourage everyone to play the game and improve upon it, adding cards, making expansion decks, and remixing the rules.