



Iowa Research Online
The University of Iowa's Institutional Repository

University of Iowa Libraries Staff Publications

1-5-2019

Teaching Book History through Card Games: Codex Conquest and Mark

Amy H. Chen
University of Iowa

© 2019 Amy Hildreth Chen.

Hosted by [Iowa Research Online](https://www.lib.uiowa.edu). For more information please contact: lib-ir@uiowa.edu.



TEACHING BOOK HISTORY THROUGH CARD GAMES

Codex Conquest and *Mark*

 THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA LIBRARIES

Amy Chen, Ph.D. | [✉ amy-chen@uiowa.edu](mailto:amy-chen@uiowa.edu) | [🐦 @amyhildrethchen](https://twitter.com/amyhildrethchen)

Why should I use games in the classroom?

Games are proven to be effective as an active learning, student-centered pedagogical strategy. By engaging in structured play, students are more likely to engage with the content and each other. As the instructor, your supplemental commentary before, during, and after the game as well as any assignments you adapt or create will further enrich their experience. Plus, as games are uncommon activities in humanities classrooms, you will ensure that your lesson—and your class—are memorable.

What do these games teach?

Codex Conquest and *Mark* are designed for upper-level undergraduate and graduate students, but high schoolers as well as professionals can learn from playing these games. *Codex Conquest* teaches players to recognize the most important books of Western civilization by their nation, century, genre, and current monetary value. Then, *Codex Conquest* empowers players to debate canon construction, identify shifting nation-state borders, discuss omitted genres, and learn the difference between cultural and financial value. *Mark* helps players identify common symbols circulating and changing in response to early modern visual culture.

When should I introduce these games to my class?

Games are most effective when they introduce topics or deepen later discussions. For example, students in an early modern literature class could play *Codex Conquest* at the start of the semester as an ice breaker, go through the majority of the class analyzing particular books seen in the game, and conclude their semester visiting these books in their local special collections or digitally online. Or, after reading a particular text, students could play *Codex Conquest* to learn the international print culture in which that text circulated or *Mark* to delve into the history of the symbolism used by its printer.

Where do I get these games?

Both game are open educational resources (OERs). As such, they are free and may be adapted to fit an instructor's objectives. Learn more about OERs at <https://www.oercommons.org/> or download the curricula, games, and rules for both games at <https://humangames.lab.uiowa.edu>.

Codex Conquest has been played at Columbia University, Harvard University, Pratt Institute, Smith College, University of California, Santa Monica, University of Iowa, and West Chester University; by attendees at the American Library Association, the London Rare Book School, the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading, and Publishing (SHARP); by K-12 students from South Carolina's Ashley Hall, Iowa's Scattergood Friends School & Farm and Venezuela's Escuela Vella Vista; and is held in the permanent collection of The National Library of Israel.

Mark's collaborators include the University of Iowa, Columbia University, and the University of California-Riverside.

