Adrian Seville

Building a 'representative' collection of printed ephemera

This article is based on a lecture given for the MA course in Collecting and Display at the Institute for Historical Research, University of London, in November 2013. A shortened version was presented after the AGM of the Ephemera Society in July 2014, where Adrian suggested an alternative title: 'The Laughable Game of What d'Ye Buy'.[1] In that game, the Toyman has several offerings, including a Fool's Cap and Bells – essential wear for any collector of ephemera! But perhaps the Long-Eared Donkey would suit the author better?

Building a 'representative' collection is perhaps not for everyone. It requires clear thought and good knowledge of the subject to define the collecting limitations in a coherent and sustainable way. Then, it requires discipline to reject an otherwise-desirable object because it does not fit the limitations or because it falls in an over-represented category. And finally it may require the collector to 'go back to square one' from time to time and rethink the scope and organisation of the whole collection.

Of course, the 'rules' are self-imposed and can therefore be broken. Every collector has a number of 'I must have it!' objects that maybe on a strict interpretation would be outside the limitations imposed. But pushing the boundaries in this way can be instructive and creative, leading the collection into new pathways. For example, the author is the proud possessor of a multiple games table from Paris that would be difficult to class as a printed object – but it does have a lovely goose game built in!

Even if a collector does not have the declared objective of making a representative collection, it can still be interesting to compare the collection with 'ephemerographic' reference sources, if only to compile wish lists. In fact, many collectors just following their instincts will quite naturally do gap-filling in a way that makes their collection more representative than before.

The rewards are considerable. The field of Ephemera is one of the few in which ordinary mortals, with finite resources, can hope by persistence and endeavour to assemble a collection of museum quality, with research potential.

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1. http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/about/blogs/room-26-cabinet-curiosities/2011/10/31/laughable-game-what-dye-buy.

2. To put it in terms familiar to the statistician, a representative collection is a model capable of giving unbiased estimates of statistics characteristic of the genre as a whole.

Introduction

Defining and building a collection

A collection can start in many ways but in all cases the crucial step is the decision to collect objects that fall within some particular class: trade cards, wedding invitations, theatre programmes - whatever. Within these wide classes, any serious collection soon becomes defined more closely, for example becoming limited by theme, by country, by date and/or by printing method. In this way what we shall call the *genre* of the collection becomes established: it consists of all the objects that come within the limitations decided upon. An example of a genre might be, say, 'British nineteenth-century trade cards', or 'chromolithographed cat postcards'.

The process of building the collection then begins. Some desirable objects may almost give themselves up to be collected, while others will be forever unattainable. But for most of the collection, decisions will have to be made: what shall I buy?

This article indicates how those myriad decisions can build a collection that is more than a mere accumulation of objects, so as to be useful in understanding the genre and in research. It is illustrated by the author's experience of collecting printed board games, but the principles apply to building any collection of printed objects. Be warned, though: collecting in this cold, analytic way is quite contrary to the warm spontaneity of letting your heart do the deciding!

A 'representative' collection

The term 'representative collection' is often heard but not explained. The approach taken in this article is to define such a collection as one that:
· Does not aim for a complete collection of the genre but
· consists only of a careful selection of objects in the genre, made so that
· conclusions reached on the basis of the collection will be broadly true of the whole genre.

For example, in a representative collection of printed sheets within some genre, the proportion printed by (say) lithography would be broadly the same as the proportion so printed in the whole genre. A similar statement would be true of any other attribute, such as era of production, iconographic style etc.

The expression 'broadly the same' could in fact be given a clear statistical meaning if required.[2] However, for present purposes, a commonsense approach is all

that is needed: studying the objects in a representative collection should give a fair idea of the whole genre. In short, a representative collection is a microcosm that does not mislead.

How not to build a representative collection – a 'bestiary' of collectors
There are several ways NOT to build a representative collection, typified (only half-humorously!) by the following 'bestiary' of collectors.
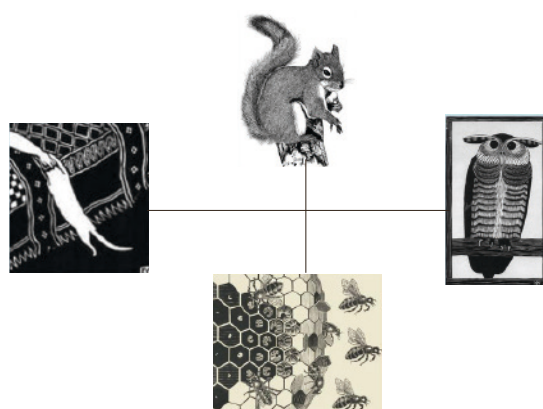
At the top is the *squirrel*, who collects indiscriminately anything and everything in the genre that is within easy reach. The houses of such collectors tend to have objects piled on the stairs, which are not in common use because the upper rooms are already full! The other extreme of the order/disorder axis is typified by the systematic *bee*, aiming for a complete collection of a restricted range of objects, perhaps with purpose-built storage ready to slot in each new acquisition. Those old-fashioned stamp albums, with printed spaces ready to receive each stamp, are a case in point. The horizontal axis of the diagram represents the influence of different aspects of desirability of objects, usually called 'taste'. To the left, is the aesthetic *cat*, who collects only those objects that are 'beautiful'. To the right, is the scholarly *owl*, who collects only those objects that are 'interesting'.

Of course, these are behavioural archetypes, so that many collectors will exhibit a combination of these behaviours, not necessarily always the same. But most of us collectors will recognise something of these archetypes in ourselves. The point is that none of these approaches to collecting will result in a representative collection. The undiscriminating squirrel, who collects only what comes readily to hand, will leave out or under-represent those objects that are difficult to get. Even the discriminating approaches of the cat or the owl will leave out important features of the genre, well-disciplined though their approaches are. As for the bee, it might seem that ideally all collections should aim for completeness and indeed theoretically, at least for printed objects

which exist in multiple copies, such a collection could always be formed. In practice however, such an aim is unattainable for all but the most restricted genres, unless perhaps enormous financial resources are available.

The importance of a 'complete' listing of the genre
It is clear that to build a representative collection, the choice of objects must be guided by some other principle than taste or ease of availability. A way must be found of building the collection so that all aspects of the genre are included, in their appropriate proportions.

The key is to work from a *complete listing* of the genre. Such lists are common in the field of book collecting, e.g. a bibliography of the complete works of some author, or of all the books on some subject. They are less common in the field of ephemera, though examples exist and, even where no complete listing is available, bibliographical techniques can allow such a list to be compiled. Such lists may not be perfectly complete, but still are useful as a guide to acquisitions. In some cases, the particular genre may have its own built-in listing, helping to show completeness: for example, postcards in a set may have individual sequence numbers; or a collector of menu cards might rely on the expectation that Cunard produced a menu for every class of passenger for every day of every voyage. Part of the joy of collecting ephemera is that the groundwork in terms of a bibliography (or should it be 'ephemerography'?) has not been done in many cases: it is much more difficult to break new ground in collecting books. The internet is a tremendous resource in such cases, but new collectors should not feel they have to do it all on their own: the Ephemera Fairs and specialist societies are full of knowledgeable people willing to give advice.

The secret, then, of making a representative collection is to *collect in harmony with the complete listing*, as exemplified below. As will be seen, close study of such a collection can add a great deal of knowledge to that contained in the listing.

The author's collection

Defining the collection
The present author's collection of printed board games grew out of a fascination with the Game of the Goose, a spiral race game of the simplest type, in which the playing tokens are moved strictly according to the throw of dice, no skill being possible.[3]

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3. Adrian Seville and John Spear, 'The Game of the Goose in England – a tradition lost', *The Ephemerist* (Winter 2010), pp. 8–14.

In its 'classic' form, the track has 63 spaces. Some are marked with a goose, which doubles the throw; others are marked with hazards such as 'death' (meaning, 'start again'). Printed examples exist from the end of the sixttenth century, while the first reference dates from 1480, in Italy. The classic game is interesting for its numerology and symbolism but the main fascination lies in the thematic variants which appeared in France from the middle of the seventeenth century onwards. Initially, these were for educational purposes but the range of themes expanded to mirror almost all of human activity. The Game of the Goose was highly influential in the development of spiral race games generally, in several of the countries of Europe.

These considerations have defined the limits of the collection's genre, as follows:

Printed single- track race games, dependent entirely on the throw of dice with no choice of move, in countries where the Game of the Goose has been significant in the development of such games.

The games so defined are often called 'spiral race games', though the track may well not be a conventional spiral. The countries are Italy, France, Germany, Britain, the Low Countries, Spain and Portugal. Arguably, some other European countries might be included, but they are much less important. In the countries listed, excepting Britain, the influence of Goose has lasted well into the twentieth century. By contrast, in Britain the game, though popular up to about 1800, has more or less died out, despite occasional efforts to reintroduce it. Nevertheless, the decision was taken to collect British spiral race games beyond this date, in order to trace any remnants of Goose influence. The influence of Goose in the development of American games is even slighter.

'Scoping' the genre
The number of collectable examples falling within the genre thus defined is huge. The development of cheap colour printing techniques meant that from the late nineteenth century onwards an explosion in numbers of printed games took place throughout Europe. The total number of *different* examples is probably of the order of ten thousand. Although the author's collection, numbering about 600 examples, contains many twentieth century games, the present article is concerned only with pre-1900 examples.

Even so, the numbers are daunting. The following table gives estimates of the approximate numbers of printed spiral race games pre-1900 for some of the relevant countries:

France	300
Britain	300
Low Countries	100+
Germany	100+
Italy	??
Spain, Portugal	??

The total number of collectable pre-1900 examples is thus over 800, even ignoring the countries for which no estimate is given. By comparison, the total number of games of this type in the pre-eminent museum collection of international scope, that of Lady Charlotte Schreiber (1812–1895), now in the British Museum, is only 68. It is evident that making a complete collection is out of the question.

Overview of the author's collection
It was clear to the author from the outset that not every game on offer could be collected but in the early years the buying policy was intuitive and informal. Only in recent years has the policy been formalised with the express aim of building a representative collection.

This has not been achieved for all the significant countries mentioned. Indeed, the coverage in the collection is far from uniform across the different countries. The first important games acquired (back in the 1970s) were thematic games from France and the collection initially grew mainly in this area. To grow the collection effectively, it was necessary to establish links with a network of dealers, auction houses and museums in France and elsewhere, and to develop a good understanding of these games. Such background work is essential in making a serious collection.

Serious collection of British games came later. Again, a network of links had to be established in order to make the required acquisitions possible. German games are relatively new to the collection, while the important areas of Italy and the Low Countries, though well represented in twentieth-century examples, are underrepresented pre-1900. Spain and Portugal have hardly been touched. As will be seen below, 'representative' status has been achieved for the collection of pre-1900 games of France and (arguably) for those of Britain, but not for those of the other countries noted above.

Games of France
For the games of France, an excellent complete listing exists, in D'Allemagne's monumental book on French Goose-type games.[4] They are systematically classified by theme, the index beginning as follows:

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4. H R D'Allemagne. *Le Noble Jeu de l'Oie* (Paris: Librairie Gründ, 1950) pp. 195–229 (in French).

The detailed list gives much useful information, including title, place and date of publication, publisher, track length and printing technique. The entry on childhood, education and teaching begins thus:

CHAPITRE II
L'ENFANCE : ÉDUCATION ET PÉDAGOGIE

JEU DE LA CONVERSATION. *Règles qu'on y doit observer. Paris, Crépy* (v. 1767). Taille-douce. 43 × 57.
Jeu à 87 cases à légendes. A la case 87 : *Salle de la Conversation.*

JEU FAMILIER DE LA CIVILITÉ pour l'instruction des enfans, dédié à la jeunesse studieuse. *Paris, Basset* (v. 1820). Taille-douce. 45.5 × 60.
Scènes de l'éducation des enfants ; à la case 63, devise : Dieu, le Roi, La Patrie. *Voir notice et pl. 6.*
— Même jeu, même éditeur, même époque, au format 50 × 67.

LE JEU DES ÉCOLIERS. *Paris, Crépy* (v. 1730). Taille-douce. 37.5 × 48.5.
Jeu avec légendes et cases muettes ; on part de la *Porte du Collège* pour arriver à *La Philosophie.*

LE JEU DES ÉCOLIERS. *Paris, Jean* (v. 1810). Taille-douce. 43.5 × 55.5.
Jeu à 44 cases. Va de l'*Entrée en classe* à la *Distribution des prix.* Dans les coins : jeux d'enfants, escrimeur, théâtre. *Voir notice et pl. 5.*
— Réimp. *Paris, Langlumé* (v. 1840).

JEU DES ÉCOLIERS (signé Tenaille) *Paris, Perrin et Cie* (v. 1880). Litho. en couleurs. 47.5 × 63.5.
Jeu rectangulaire comprenant 65 médaillons : scènes de la vie des écoliers jusqu'aux grandes écoles. Au centre, *La Jeunesse guidée par l'Espérance.*

LES HOCHETS. Nouveau jeu dédié à la Jeunesse. *S. l. n. d.* (v. 1830). Litho. 40 × 51.
Jeu de forme ovale finement exécuté. Va de l'adolescence au mariage ; pas de règle du jeu.

There are a few problems: some games in the list are not race games at all and must be stripped out; a few games have not come to D'Allemagne's attention; and the treatment of reprint editions needs care. For these reasons, the numbers quoted in the table below are indicative only.

France: Number of games pre-1900, by date

Date	D'Allemagne	Seville	%
1600 1650	30	5	17
1700	22	6	27
1750	45	18	40
1800	113	15	13
1850	78	43	55
Total	**288**	**87**	**30**

The table compares numbers of games listed by D'Allemagne with the numbers in corresponding 50-year time periods in the author's collection, combining the periods beginning 1600 and 1650 since numbers are small. The author's collection contains 87 French games pre-1900: about 30 % of the total games listed,

reasonably well spread over the five time periods. The relatively low number in the 1800 period is partly explained by the existence of some games from this period as later reprints from original plates.

It is also possible to compare by themes. In the following table, D'Allemagne's themes have been grouped into eight categories:

France: Games by theme

	D'Allemagne	Seville	%
Goose, monkey	57	17	30
Human life, moral	40	10	25
Education, propaganda, literature	33	11	33
History, personages	56	8	14
Geography, travel	27	13	48
Heraldry, army, navy	33	18	55
Science and applications	27	5	19
Fashion, spectacles, sport	15	5	33
Total	**288**	**87**	**30**

The games in the collection are quite well spread over these categories. Ideally each percentage should be close to the overall 30% figure, though some statistical variation is expected. The percentage for *History and personages* is low, while the percentages in the following two categories are a bit high. These numbers are a useful guide to acquisitions policy and gap-filling. For example, the author has declined a number of geographical games on the ground of over-representation and has recently made some acquisitions (not included in the figures) of historical games to fill the evident gap.

Similar comparisons can be made for other attributes covered in the listing, such as printing technique, place of publication) etc. In this way, the composition of the collection can be tested against the complete listing. The collection of pre-1900 French games is large enough, with proportions sufficiently near to the complete listing, that it may fairly be called 'representative'.

Tracing connecting threads
An important way of using a representative collection is for the detailed study of aspects that are not covered in the listing – for example, text, iconography or decoration. Sometimes this may lead to questions that can be answered within the collection itself; at other times, it may point to where other collections may usefully be consulted.

Of course, this kind of study can be done on collections that are not representative. The key feature of a representative collection is that, though not complete, it is comprehensive enough to enable identification

of groups of objects that share a particular distinctive attribute.[5]

If the common attribute is not too rare, the representative collection is likely to contain multiple examples of objects with the attribute, which diligent study can identify, so that the thread can be followed to its end, as in the following case.

An interesting common attribute is found in certain of the French games in the author's collection. In these games, the effect of the French Revolution and the regime changes in its aftermath can be detected, leading to a connecting thread of 'political correctness' in the decades that followed.
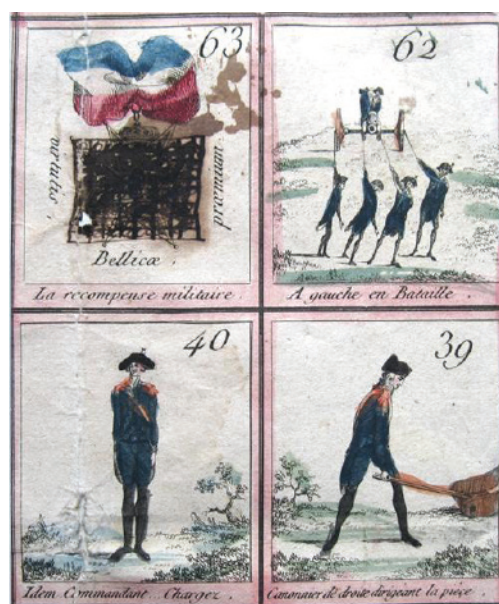
One such game is the *Jeu des Exercices Militaires de l'Infanterie Française et des Manœuvres de Canon.*[6] The example in the author's collection is remarkable for the fact that the winning space has been crudely altered, obliterating the central image with ink and adding a painted tricolour above it. The surrounding text has not been interfered with and reads: *bellicae virtutis praemium*, (the reward of valour in war).

This identifies the obliterated image as being the insignia of the Order of St Louis. This Order was created by Louis XIV in 1693 and was reserved for French Catholic officers having served at least ten years in the army. After the Revolution, royal references were unacceptable, hence the alteration.

Another set of politically-correct alterations appears in the *Game of the Traveller in Europe* illustrated in figure 1. It is a thematic Goose-variant game on the buildings and monuments of important cities of Europe, by the Paris firm of Basset, dating from the early years of the nineteenth century. The 'Goose' spaces are indicated by religious buildings, while the hazards are cleverly linked to those of classic Goose. For example, the classic 'bridge' space at 6 becomes Westminster Bridge, London, while the 'death' space at 58 shows the tomb of the Queen of Denmark in Stockholm. The winning space shows the *Arc de Triomphe*, topped with a royal emblem – it is not unusual in a French game for the winning space to be French! The interest comes on close examination of the central text. As indicated in figure 1a, the spacing of certain phrases appears odd. Most

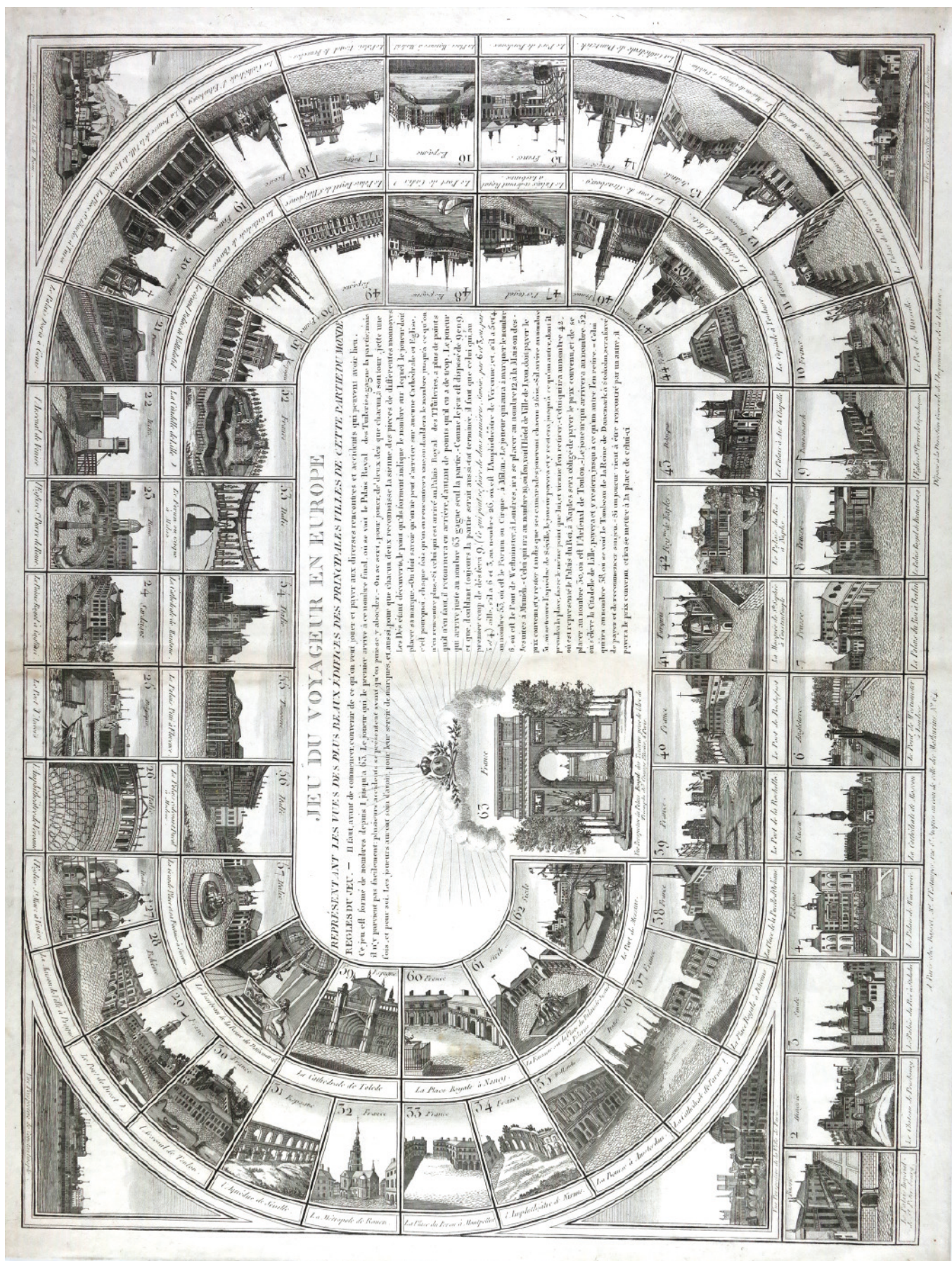Royal Order of St Louis obliterated in ink and tricolour added.

Cross of the Order of Saint-Louis.

include the word 'royal' but there is also a reference to the Forum in Milan.

This is a case whose full explanation must be found outside the collection. There is another edition of this game (figure 1b) in the Rothschild (National Trust) collection at Waddesdon Manor. It is even more intriguing in that the doubtful areas of text have been overwritten in pen; and a different royal emblem, a Fleur de Lys, has been inked in above the final arch – but what a Fleur de Lys! This one has wings and from its feet there emanate red thunderbolts.

The final piece of the explanation appears on consulting the John Johnson Collection in the Bodleian Library, where the earliest version of the game is to be found. It is clear (figure 1c) that this version, dating from January 1813, was produced in the Napoleonic era. The crowned Eagle of Jupiter (with wings, thunderbolts and all) was one of the main emblems of Napoleon I. After his fall

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5. As a concrete case, the decorative border of roses noticed by Linda Hannas in her study of English jigsaw puzzles comes to mind: it was a significant connecting 'thread' that led, after much further research, to her ultimate identification of the makers of this group of puzzles as being the Barfoots. Hannas L., *The English jigsaw puzzle* (London: Wayland, 1972), pp. 42–59.

6. Game of Military Exercises of the French Infantry and Artillery Manoeuvres (Paris: Basset, 1780).

1. *Jeu du Voyageur en Europe*, (Game of the Traveller in Europe).
Paris: Paul André Basset. Etching and engraving on paper, approx.
460 × 617 mm. This version was issued during the period of the
restored Bourbon monarchy, which began after the fall of Napoleon
I in 1814 and ended in 1830. [Author's collection]
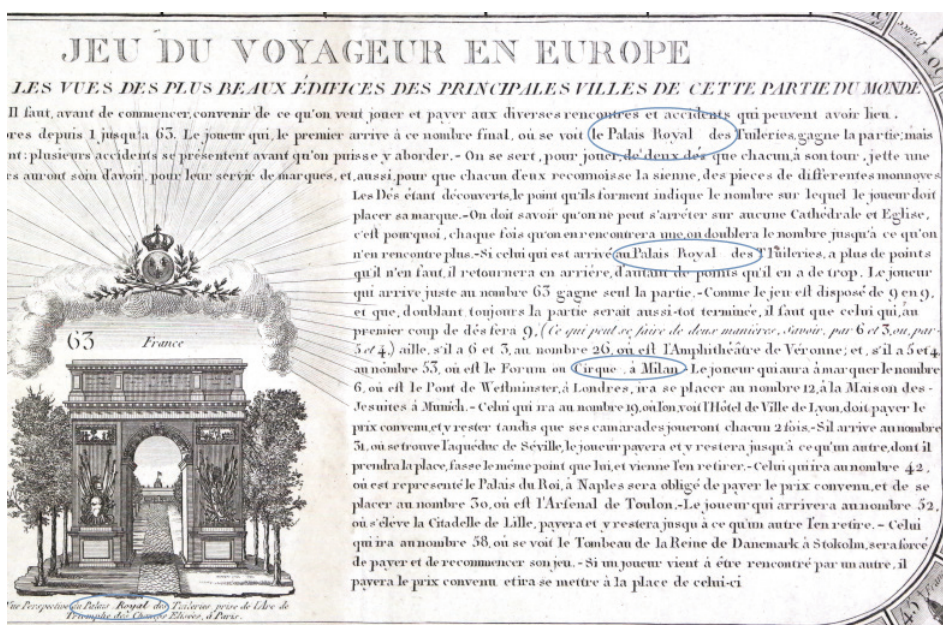
1a. Detail of the centre of the game in the author's collection, with amendments to the plate circled.

1b. Detail showing manuscript alterations in the Waddesdon example, including the Fleur-de-Lys above the Arc de Triomphe. Paris: Paul André Basset,1813. Etching and engraving on paper, with later hand colouring in watercolour and bodycolour, c. 1820. [Waddesdon The Rothschild Collection (The National Trust); acc. no. 2669.2.21. Photo: Mike Fear © The National Trust, Waddesdon Manor]

1c. Detail of the original edition of 1813, showing references to Napoleon I as Emperor, obscured or amended in the prints shown in 1a and 1b above after his fall in 1814 , including his emblem, the Eagle of Jupiter, with thunderbolts. [Bodleian Library, University of Oxford: John Johnson Collection: Games folder (30)]

and the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy in 1814, a game referring to the abdicated Emperor would have been politically incorrect, hence the alterations and amendments.

Discovering connecting threads of this kind can be hugely interesting and can form the basis for research studies of some depth.

Games of Britain
For British games, the nearest equivalent to D'Allemagne's book is that of Whitehouse.[7] Unfortunately, although it treats games thematically and contains useful information, it is seriously incomplete. A much more satisfactory listing (unpublished) is that made by a collector in America , John Spear, who identifies about 265 pre-1900 British single-track race games known to exist, as against just under 200 identified by Whitehouse. He has used standard bibliographical techniques to extend Whitehouse's listing, searching in museum and library catalogues worldwide as well as amassing an impressive collection of his own. The present author's collection includes about 20% of the games identified by John Spear.

Relatively few British printed race games exist before the end of the eighteenth century, Goose, Snake, and Courtship and Matrimony being the only contenders prior to the invention of map-based educational games in mid-century. The great flowering of British games was in the period 1800–1850 as seen in the table. The author's collection is reasonably representative of all periods, though far from complete.

Britain: Number of games pre-1900

Date	J Spear list	Seville	%
1600–	43	11	26
1800–	158	27	17
1850–	64	14	22
Total	**265**	**52**	**20**

Using the collection to compare attributes of different groups
The primary purpose of a representative collection is to enable conclusions to be drawn from it that are broadly true of the whole genre. An important part of this is to compare the attributes of different groups of objects within the collection.

An example of this is shown below, where the author's collection of British games is used to compare track shapes before 1800 with those after 1800.

7. F.R.B. Whitehouse. *Table Games of Georgian and Victorian Days* (London: Peter Garnett, 1951).
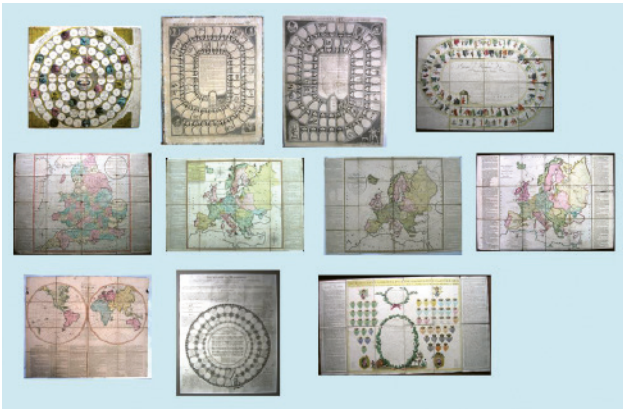
Track shapes of British games before 1800.

Track shapes of British games 1800–1900.

The preponderance of map-based games in the earlier set is notable, reflecting the early history of British educational games. In the later set (only a few of the games are shown) there is much more diversity, including notably the goose-shaped track of the first game. The track of the second of these games is actually made up of small cards, laid together: it is from the *Upidee* series produced by the London firm of W Faulkner around 1900. Including it in the collection begs the question of whether it is a board game or a card game! The third game, *Beside the Broad Ocean*, is a beautiful seaside scene probably drawn and made by James Widdowfield Barfoot in about 1890: the track is implied by a series of numbers distributed across the picture. The two groups of games obviously differ in respect of diversity of track shape – and statistics indeed confirm that the differences are significant and thus likely to be replicated across pre-1900 British race games as a whole.

Why the size of a representative collection matters
Comparisons of the kind outlined in the preceding section require that the groups that are being compared must not be too small: you need at least a good handful of objects to deduce anything significant. This is why 'collecting one of everything' will not make a representative collection, although at first sight it seems a good economical strategy.

On the other hand, a representative collection of even fifty objects is a useful instrument. There are many ways

in which it can be carved up into groups, each of significant size, to enable comparison of attributes between those groups. Size does matter – the bigger the collection, the finer the detail that can be studied.

Size also matters in identifying attributes in common so as to link a set of objects by a connecting thread – the more objects in the set that are present in the collection, the easier it may be to spot the link.

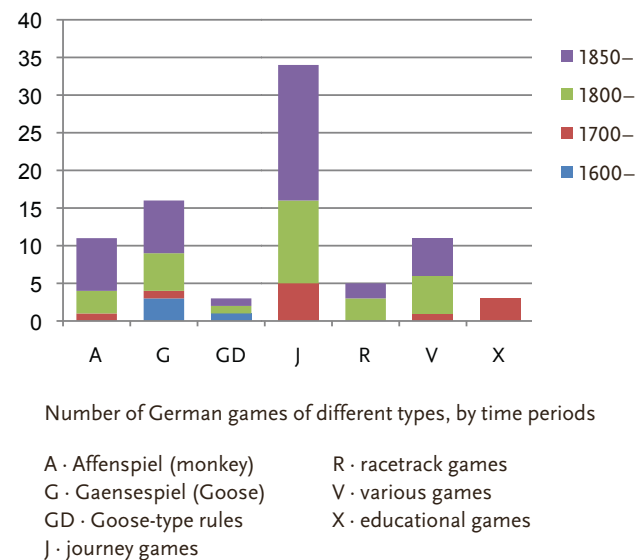*Games of Germany – making an image database as a 'complete' listing*

If no suitable complete listing exists, then the collector must make one! The present author was forced into doing this in connection with research on the games of Germany. The technique used was to create an image data base of games, mostly from illustrated exhibition catalogues and, where available, from on-line image data bases. Museums and libraries consulted included those in Munich, Berlin, Nuremberg, Ravenna and London, as well as published works on popular prints, in particular Heiner Vogel's book on popular prints and dice games.[8] The advantage of using an image data base, as compared with a text-based catalogue, is that it is possible to verify what kind of game is involved. There are many printed games that are not single track race games and these often cannot be separated out by title alone, nor will the catalogue entry usually be sufficiently specific.

Of course, this technique will usually find examples of the same game from several different collections. In fact, this duplication provides a good way of determining whether the search has been sufficiently wide. If on the other hand each collection newly searched brings up many new examples, then more work is needed. The final data base identifies just fewer than 100 games; by comparison, the author's collection includes only 12 of these, too few to make a useful representative collection.

Making a 'complete' list in this way is not without its difficulties. Often, the quality of the image is poor, such that text is not legible – and text is crucial in understanding these games. Also, one is reliant on the cataloguer for information on aspects such as printing process, not usually determinable without physical examination of the game itself. Another difficulty is that most museum collections in the field of printed ephemera have been formed by private collectors, whose collecting policy may be anything but inclusive. For example, if the games are (say) part of a collection of woodcuts, then engraved games will be wholly absent.

8. Heiner Vogel, *Bilderbogen und Würfelspiel* (Leipzig: Edition Leipzig, 1981).

Nonetheless, interesting information can be derived from such an exercise. The following chart shows the numbers of pre-1900 German games in the image database, analysed by theme and showing production periods.

Number of German games of different types, by time periods

A · Affenspiel (monkey)   R · racetrack games
G · Gaensespiel (Goose)   V · various games
GD · Goose-type rules   X · educational games
J · journey games

A striking thing is the evident popularity of 'Journey' games in all periods. The prototype of these is the *Post- und Reisespiel*, (Post and Journey Game) which appears from about 1790 and represents the progress of a stage-coach towards a German city. These distinctively German games are like the Game of Goose in having a regular series of favourable spaces and in having various hazards connected with the journey. As time went on, the mode of transport was updated to retain topicality and they remained popular well into the twentieth century.

Another comparison relates to the printing methods used at different periods:

Numbers of German games with different printing processes, by time periods
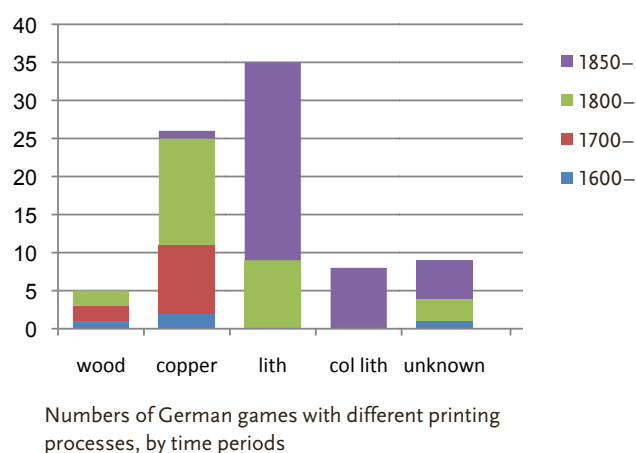
It is clear that copper engraving was the process of choice for printed games in Germany until the adoption of lithography in the nineteenth century, with colour lithography following in the latter half of that century – a not unexpected result!

If useful information can be obtained from a 'virtual' collection in the form of an image data base, is there any point in struggling to make a representative collection of the real thing? The answer to that question is likely to change as the digitisation of museum collections is extended and improved. The British Museum is exceptional in having very good, legible images of its ephemera, downloadable without charge for private research, requiring only an easy online registration process. The Bodleian has similarly good images (fully downloadable at reference quality) attached to its (incomplete) online catalogue, with zoomable images available through various projects.[9] The British Library lags far behind in digital image access. Across continental Europe, the tendency is to require payment for high-quality digital images, though the cost is a mere fraction of the cost of a rare item. Collectors of ephemera must make their own choices between 'real and 'virtual' collections.

Discussion

Building and using a representative collection: a summary
The steps in building and using a representative collection may be summarised thus:
- The collecting genre is defined with an eye to the possible scope
- Building the collection is based on a (more or less) complete listing of the genre
- The collection is compared with the listing for key attributes (date, theme etc)
- This guides acquisition policy (gap filling etc.)
- The collection is used to give information beyond that contained in the listing
- Within statistical limits, this information is characteristic of the whole genre
- Connecting threads can be identified
- The collection can also throw up questions best answered by studying other material.

These steps can be recursive. For example, as the collection builds up, it may become clear that the scope as originally defined is too wide for comfort: in particular, the resources required may be excessive. A subset of the original genre may then be selected as defining a reduced scope of the collection, so that some objects can be 'de-accessioned' – museum-speak for 'sold'!
Or, as knowledge increases, it may become clear that the scope should be widened, to illustrate important links.

9. Notably ProQuest's *The John Johnson Collection: an archive of printed ephemera*, for which access is free in the UK through HE, FE, public libraries and schools. Full details and links are given on the Collection's website: http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/johnson.

It should by now be evident that a (brave!) collector starting on a wholly new genre, not identified by other collectors or by museums, will be well advised to spend time on researching the genre, so as to determine what its scope may be, before committing resources fully to the project.

Limiting the scope of a collection
When the scope of a collection is to be limited to a sub-set of a broad collecting genre, there are ways in which this can adversely affect the usefulness of the collection. Some possible ways of limiting a collection are these:
- by country
- by date range
- by theme
- by price range
- by quality or aesthetics
- by storage requirements

Of these, limiting by country is unlikely to cause problems. Most collectors and many researchers limit themselves to one country. Naturally, there is a downside – influences of one country on another will be not apparent from the collection. How serious this is depends on the genre. Printed board games are essentially international, even as far back as the late sixteenth century, so that a single-country collection risks missing many interesting connections.

Likewise, limiting by date range is well understood. The earliest objects may be prohibitively expensive and, rather than spend disproportionately on them, it may be better to limit the earliest collected date. The earliest objects are in any case likely to be represented in museums and for study purposes this may well suffice.

Limiting by theme can be problematic. If the theme is one collected in other main genres, it may be a good basis for collection. For example, games that show theatre and entertainment are collected even among non-games-specialists; air travel is another example. However, a theme internal to the genre, such as one based on particular game rules, is likely to have less-wide appeal.

Limiting by price range is likely to destroy the usefulness of the collection as a research tool. By the same token, limiting by quality or aesthetics is likely to have a similar effect, though a high quality collection will have its own appeal and may be more commercial, if sold, than a broader collection including 'rubbish'.

Finally, limiting by storage requirements is unappealing. Exceptions, though, may have to be made. At least one famous Goose game is carved in a large block of limestone! ◼