

Play My Resume: Exploring Resume and CV Differentiation Through Personalized Web-Based Games

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Abstract

Since the 1980s, creative job seekers have turned to nontraditional and interactive resume formats to help set themselves apart from other candidates. The “game resume” is one such example that continues to garner praise eleven years after the first publicly available example by graphic designer Robby Leonardi. This study investigates: a) the history of nontraditional and interactive resumes leading up to resumes that are playable; b) a do-it-yourself (DIY) game development culture setting the conditions for short, personal games; and c) the characteristics of an ever-expanding game resume collection on the itch.io games sharing platform. Thirty-three game resumes were isolated and manually reviewed against a comprehensive playtesting protocol, examining key design choices and features. A qualitative analysis of findings was conducted, leading to a more complete understanding of this online phenomenon, and beginning the process of characterizing and solidifying it as an emerging practice. We may reasonably conclude that: a) game resumes are almost always created by game designers, developers, and adjacent creative personalities seeking employment in the games industry; b) common game conventions such as scoring, power-ups, health bars, and inventory systems are intentionally kept light or even omitted altogether; and c) game resumes are designed to be short (less than five minutes of gameplay) and easy (player immortality) to enable an uninterrupted single playthrough.

Keywords

Game resumes; nontraditional resumes; interactive resumes; indie game development; autobiographical games; ludobiographies.

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Introduction

Since the 1980s, job seekers in creative fields have turned to nontraditional and interactive resume formats to help set themselves apart from other candidates. Innovative home office tools and user-friendly software such as HyperCard and Microsoft PowerPoint made it easier to realize a unique resume/CV vision. While nontraditional resume styles can be alluring options, it is important to consider both the industry and the hiring manager's attitudes concerning the rejection of longstanding norms (Glenn, 2022). Professions that demand highly creative individuals, such as graphic artists and game developers, are likely to be more receptive to this practice, making it a decision that requires some level of strategic planning on the part of the candidate.

The digital age of personal computers and progressive technological innovations has seen a range of truly unconventional resumes that have led to employment (Theodorou, 2021). One of the examples that continues to receive praise ten years after it was originally released to the public is Robby Leonardi's (2013) highly acclaimed game resume (see Figure 1). The attraction of fun, creative, and playable resumes quickly became evident and exceeded Leonardi's original expectations (Ford, 2013).

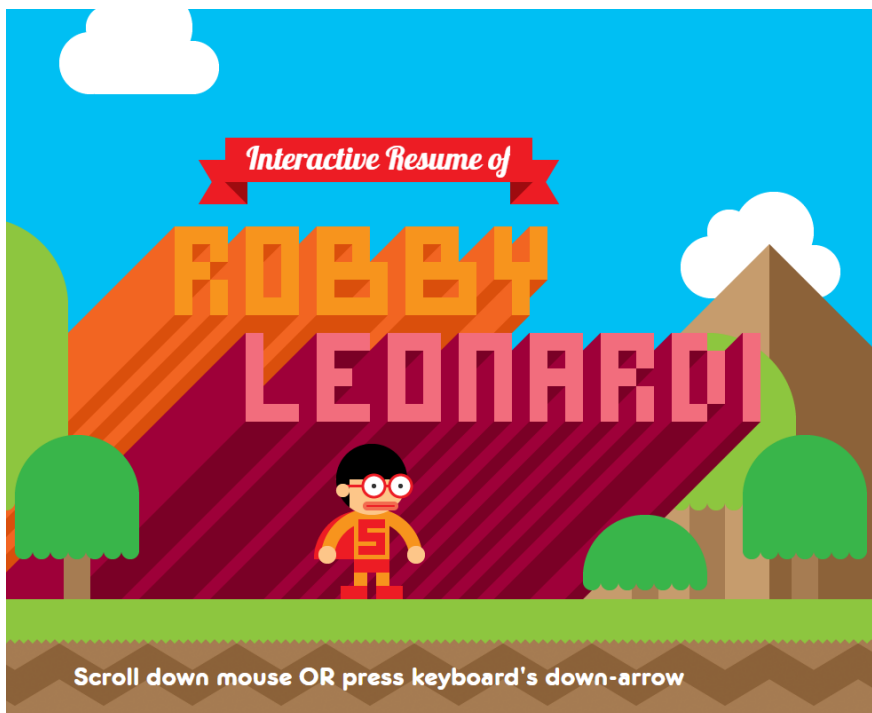


Figure 1. In-game screenshot of Robby Leonardi's 2013 online interactive game resume. Screenshot by the author.

In the same way that advancing technologies ushered in a sea of interactive resumes, the same holds true for independent (indie) games with game engines that eliminate many barriers to entry (Gallagher, 2019). With the competitive demands for easy-to-learn, powerful game

engines, new games rapidly flooded the market. Eventually others tried to imitate Leonardi's work or expand upon it (Mulla, 2017), further solidifying the game resume as a burgeoning practice.

This democratization of game development tools also encouraged indie game developers to approach the medium as a means for creating personalized games. Poremba (2007) describes this phenomenon in the following:

Artists that take advantage of the hypermediated, fragmented and procedural qualities of the medium may find additional tools at their disposal for the crafting of self-narrative, and present works in which the play between the self and its representation is all part of the game. (p. 707)

The purpose of this study is to document the game resume phenomenon after a decade of practice. This research focuses on the common characteristics, features, and design choices of game resumes, unpacking the longevity of the phenomenon and the motivations behind their creation. From this, there are two primary research questions that guide this study:

- RQ1: How might resume/CV games be defined?
- RQ2: What are the core characteristics of game resumes?

This study investigates: a) the history of digital, nontraditional, and interactive resumes leading up to resumes that are playable; b) a do-it-yourself (DIY) game development scene setting the conditions for short, personal games; and c) the characteristics of an ever-expanding game resume collection on the itch.io games sharing platform. I developed a more complete understanding of this online phenomenon through a qualitative analysis of findings and began the process of characterizing and solidifying it as an emerging practice.

For the purposes of this study, the term "resume" is used to reference both resumes and CVs. Despite having minute differences in scope and design, their interchangeability is apparent within this investigation into game resumes/CVs. There was some deliberate thought into what we must call the phenomenon under focus (resumes in playable formats). While the term "game resume" seems an obvious choice, there might be a philosophical basis for determining the overall makeup of a playable resume. Is this a game with "resume" as descriptor (resume game), or is this a resume fashioned as a game (game resume)? In keeping with this study's existing naming convention shared between nontraditional resumes and interactive resumes, I opted for "game resume" as the prevailing term.

The differences between "nontraditional resumes" and "interactive resumes" must also be clarified here. Nontraditional resumes refer to a broad range of alternative, mixed-media approaches to showcasing

qualifications beyond the industry standard paper format. Interactive resumes are resumes that welcome some participation by the reviewer, for example interactive buttons and hyperlinks and, as such, belong within the nontraditional resume ecosystem. Game resumes are a variety of interactive resumes and are therefore nontraditional by their very nature.

Finally, this research into ludobiographies inspired me to advance a new term to describe this fledgling practice—the “ludocalificare.” Where “ludo” translates to “relating to games” and “biography” is synonymous to a person’s history, I find it reasonable to apply a similar naming convention to clarify the “playing with credentials” phenomenon. This also helps to frame game resumes within the same ecosystem as autobiographical games yet identifying them as a sufficiently different category of indie game expression.

Literature Review

Offered here are a few philosophical lenses that help shape the “resume-as-game” phenomenon. To better understand its origins, it is critical to define the shared characteristics, design choices, and genres of this under-explored game subset. I first examine the history of nontraditional resumes and the interactivity that surfaced through introducing home office technologies to the public. I then consult literature describing “autobiographical games,” also referred to as “ludobiographies” by some scholars, and how the rise of easy-to-use game design engines allowed persons without access to large programming teams to tell their stories through the game medium. This literature review concludes with an analysis of game resumes, with a particular emphasis on Leonardi’s 2013 game resume that set the tone for future works.

Nontraditional and Interactive Resumes

Unorthodox choices in resume formats and mediums are not necessarily anything new; however, the introduction of digital tools did reveal more opportunities for self-expression. With the availability of novel home office tools and software, such as HyperCard and Microsoft PowerPoint, it was inevitable that some resumes would challenge longstanding conventions in favour of a more interactive, imaginative, and personalized format. Suddenly users discovered new strategies to deliver their resumes in memorable, engaging ways that distinguish them from other submissions.

One of the earliest documented examples comes from the author of *iPhoneography: How to Create Inspiring Photos with Your Smartphone* (Clawson, 2015), who secured immediate employment from an interactive resume accessible by floppy disc, a truly novel approach for its time. This is an example of new hardware entering home offices and uncovering possibilities for users that had not existed prior. Software such as Microsoft PowerPoint, with its multiple slides and interactivity

features, gave users the necessary tools to develop interactive resumes (Laudon, 2001). With the commoditization of hardware and software that was once only accessible to large professional teams, individual users had an ever-expanding palette of tools to share their personal and professional backgrounds with employers.

The advantages of interactive resumes are plentiful. Interactive resumes that make use of graphics, animation, and sound are effective in conveying an applicant's creative and technical ability (Sharp, 1995). Elements such as Gantt graphics and timetables can draw greater attention to accomplishments over standard text (Eken, 2020). There is also the added benefit of online hosting solutions, making it easier for employers to access genuine professional examples and e-portfolios (Goldsmith & Martin, 2009). An interactive resume has the potential to command a competitive edge over standard resumes for its ability to positively arrest a hiring manager's attention.

Even though there are clear advantages to nontraditional resumes, it is not without its risks. Firstly, it is important to consider the appropriateness of offering a nontraditional resume in one's specific industry. Glenn (2022) offers the examples of a copywriter providing blog samples and a graphic designer curating infographics, two fields that might be more open to alternative formats. There are other fields, such as accounting and nursing, where the expectation for a conventional resume is perhaps more rigid. Therefore, it is important to know a resume's audience before deciding on this approach. Additionally, the designer of an interactive resume must consider the user experience, such as the ease with which the employer accesses and navigates the resume as well as its compatibility on specific devices (Sharp, 1995). The suitability and quality of the interactive resume factors majorly in whether it achieves its desired outcome or is ignored altogether.

The e-portfolio is also referenced alongside interactive resumes, allowing prospective employers to inspect examples of the applicant's past works in a hyperlinked, online showcase. Some authors reference e-portfolios and interactive resumes as being so closely related that they are near indistinguishable (Akter, 2017; Ali et. al, 2022; Goldsmith & Martin, 2009). Other authors do provide some lines of separation, such as Collins (2008), who describes the interactive resume as a sort of "promotional presentation" and e-portfolios as "examples of work and artistic creations" (p. 5857). The power of web-based technologies enables embedding e-portfolio elements into resumes, thereby introducing further interactivity. A dynamic, hyperlinked experience adds depth to a resume, which is simply not possible in nondigital, noninteractive, traditional formats.

It should now be evident that nontraditional/interactive resumes have gained a foothold within a variety of industries with new hardware and

software entering the home office and with the advent of web-based technologies. Meanwhile, this broadening of easy-to-use creative tools also resulted in a DIY game development renaissance of personal autobiographical games (Gallagher, 2019). Casual game developers with little programming ability could suddenly express themselves through games. These new game developer tools would mature and eventually be utilized in the development of game resumes, having already established a track record as mediums for creative self-expression.

Autobiographical Games

This study introduces a theoretical framing known as "ludobiography," with "ludo" roughly translating to "relating to games" and "biography" being "an account of someone's life." Autobiographical games are sometimes referred to as a sort of "ludobiography" by contemporary game studies scholars (Chia & Ruffino, 2022; Gallagher, 2019; Gallagher, 2022) and provide a theoretical base in our examination of game resumes.

Autobiographical games were realized nearly a decade ago as amateur game designers used game development to tell personal stories and share emotional experiences (Haggis, 2016). Simplified game engines reveal a Foucauldian "technology of the self," according to Werning (2017), making game development an activity that is intimate and personal (p. 30). Game developer Kristopher Poulin-Thibault describes in an interview the dynamic nature of identity when making a personal game, allowing the creator an opportunity to re-explore memories and, in a very real sense, recreate who they are as a person (Poirier-Poulin, 2020). Where the autobiography was once the thing of books, digital technologies made it increasingly possible to deliver stories through interactive multimedia. In these games, the player experiences a slice of the author's life through a carefully constructed interactive game.

Autobiographical games deal with the creator's expression of self and persona. These personal games often highlight challenging life situations, acting in some ways as a therapeutic device (Farber & Schrier, 2021; Poirier-Poulin, 2020). Autobiographical games are described by Gallagher (2022) as "a vector for self-expression, empathy and understanding" (p. 359). While the player might have some flexibility in shaping pieces of narrative through play, these types of games preserve the author's persona by limiting their interactions as necessary (Werning, 2017). In these ways the game serves as a vehicle to tell a particular story while providing the player with some degree of control, thus building an empathetical understanding of the author and their background.

Autobiographical games typically reside outside of the mainstream in that they assume a unique procedural rhetoric approach and lack many of the tell-tale elements of fully-fledged games. Bogost (2008) defines procedural rhetoric as arguments made through dynamic models, rules,

and behaviour instead of with words and images (p. 125). The procedural rhetoric of the autobiographical game acts to constrain the player and promote truths about the author's life and character through play (Cole et al., 2020). These games are often short and lacking in gameplay features and scoring (Haggis, 2016), and are principally designed to carry a narrative and capture a mood. Autobiographical games can be structured as short, uncomplicated mini-games with text that explain aspects of the author's life (Bercuci, 2017); a theme which I find later as being remarkably consistent with game resumes, albeit dissimilar in some key ways.

The autobiographical game deals in the expression of self and reduction of gameplay elements like scoring and difficulty into something that resembles a game but is uniquely other. Given their experimental qualities, there are still some debates by developers and players regarding whether to call these immersive experiences "games" in the first place (Haggis, 2016). One thing is for certain: Autobiographical games are principally concerned with the expression of self and persona, falling somewhere outside of mainstream attitudes toward games.

The Game Resume

We may trace back the unique conditions that gave rise to a crossing of games and resumes, given what we know of the rise of interactive resumes and autobiographical games introduced through easy-to-use technologies. Where interactive resumes gained in creativity, indie game development also became more possible for the layperson. No longer did a game developer require advanced programming expertise to create a game. Eventually, autobiographical games and interactive resumes would merge in their shared evolution through the introduction of Robby Leonardi's *Interactive Resume*.

In 2013, web designer/developer Robby Leonardi created an impressive resume side-scroller video game, akin to *Super Mario Brothers'* (Nintendo, 1985) horizontal scrolling screen, to showcase his multidisciplinary skill set. This was the first of its kind, drumming up immediate fanfare (Mcneil, 2014) that is still enjoyed by new visitors to this day (Bernazzani, 2022). Leonardi was able to convey his expertise and experience creatively while harkening back to the classic days of popular and universally recognizable videogames (Volk & Currier, 2020). What Leonardi achieved was a transmission of his personal brand that abandoned all acceptable resume norms (Deitz, 2015). Despite this, Leonardi's innovative approach shone through and won people over.

Most of the references within game resume literature point to the work of Leonardi; however, there is some evidence of others replicating or providing their own spin on the genre. One programmer used their downtime between jobs to improve upon Leonardi's platformer game resume with the Phaser 2D game framework (deVilla, 2017). Mulla (2017) appears to be a supporter of the emergent resume type,

encouraging readers lacking in design skills to seek outside assistance when creating their game resumes (p. 1). A cursory look on itch.io presents 60 results for the search term “resume,” suggesting that the practice is alive and well, albeit as a small indie game phenomenon set outside of mainstream pursuits.

Methods

If a review of literature almost exclusively describes Leonardi’s work, where are these other playable resumes? Given what we know of autobiographical games, my assumption was that resume games are likely to be found where indie autobiographical games flourish. Werning (2017) provides us with a clue: “While autobiographical game-making is still far from becoming a widespread social ‘movement,’ other platforms such as the game distribution service itch.io are gradually emerging to provide a social context for this type of content” (p. 39). This clue suggests that itch.io curates a variety of experimental games and would therefore serve as the platform to produce a viable sample of games.

I elected for “resume” as the single search parameter on the itch.io games sharing platform, resulting in 60 results. Each game’s description page was reviewed along with a short playthrough to narrow results down to only those games that are clear attempts at game resumes. For my inclusion criteria regarding legitimacy, I asked two basic questions: 1) is this an interactive experience that requires some player input and resembles a videogame? and 2) is the purpose of the game to highlight elements of a resume? My research was inclusive of all game genres, as any further specificity could result in losing some nuance of the craft and limiting the practice to only one or a few game types. My intention here was to investigate a sample of game resumes and begin the work of documenting their commonalities and areas of divergence.

At this point, I level my focus on the original research question: “What are the core characteristics of game resumes?” Given Leonardi’s game is at the center of any discussion about game resumes, it was selected to serve as the template by which an analysis could be performed on works belonging to other creators. The goal of this exercise was twofold: a) gain a firm grasp of the core characteristics of Leonardi’s game resume; and b) establish the common parameters for a playtesting protocol suitable for examining the other game resumes in this study. Table 1 presents the identifiable characteristics comprising Leonardi’s work:

| Category | Value(s) | Description | Source |
|-----------------|------------------------------|---|---------------------|
| Size (playtime) | Small | Leonardi intentionally made the game small to allow players an opportunity to experience the entire CV. | (Siddall, 2013) |
| View | Parallax scrolling | Multi-layered background achieved with layers moving at different speeds. | (Wang & Shyu, 2014) |
| Genre | Platformer | Side-scroller platformer game. | (deVilla, 2017) |
| Rooms / levels | Multiple levels | Level 1 (ground) contains "about" section; level 2 (underwater) contains "skills" section; level 3 (rooftop) contains "experience" section; level 4 (hot air balloon) contains "awards and publications" section. | (Ford, 2013) |
| Controls | Left, right | Navigate left and right with up and down buttons. | |
| Resume elements | Work history, skills, awards | Player walks through game areas exhibiting elements of a resume. | (Theodorou, 2021) |
| Scoring | None | | |
| Profession | Designer | Web designer/developer | |

Table 1. Core parameters of game resumes.

The "core characteristics of game resumes" table (Table 1) was developed organically through an analysis of Leonardi's work and is the tool that I used to measure and describe other selected game resumes on itch.io. The table structure was created when considering the important elements comprising a game resume as no other analytical instrument exists to serve this unique research focus. Each game was played once, and notes were compiled in accordance with the qualitative data instrument. I then engaged in a qualitative thematic analysis of the data aggregated to uncover findings relating to a) size (playtime); b) view; c) genre; d) rooms/levels; e) controls; f) resume elements; g)

scoring/game elements; and h) creator's profession. The game's tool/engine was acquired through webpage metadata or, when unclear, retrieved through the game playthrough. Results were compiled and conclusions drawn before providing implications and recommendations for future research.

Results

The resulting 33 game resumes selected for analysis are represented in Table 2 alongside descriptive webpage metadata for each game.

| Game Title | Reference | Creation Tool |
|---|-------------------------|---------------|
| <i>Dwarva for Hire—a resume in twine</i> | (Ms .45, 2016) | Twine |
| <i>Resume</i> | (Montagut, 2016) | Construct |
| <i>DEC 2016 Resume</i> | (Mostyn, 2016) | Unity |
| <i>Interactive Resume Ben Kovacs</i> | (Kovacs, 2017) | Unity |
| <i>Zachary Cober Playable Resume</i> | (Cober, 2017) | GameMaker |
| <i>my Resume</i> | (Iim, 2017) | Unity |
| <i>A RESUME</i> | (bitsy, 2018) | Twine |
| <i>Cooper Heriot resume</i> | (Heriot, 2018) | Unity |
| <i>My Resume Game</i> | (TheDankZebra, 2019) | Construct |
| <i>Resume</i> | (Youkos, 2019) | RPGMaker |
| <i>ResuméBound</i> | (ishfulthinking, 2019) | Unknown |
| <i>You always need a French Marketer</i> | (clementineg, 2019) | GDevelop |
| <i>Building Blocks— A Playable Resume</i> | (HeliusCarthaxis, 2020) | Unreal Engine |
| <i>Antonio Barba Resume The Game</i> | (Barba, 2020) | Unity |
| <i>Benjamin Simms— Interactive Resume</i> | (Simms, 2020) | GDevelop |

| | | |
|--|-----------------------|---------|
| <i>Moises CV</i> | (MoisesC, 2020) | Unity |
| <i>Raffaele Ariano Resume</i> | (Ariano, 2021) | Godot |
| <i>Interactive Resume</i> | (groovyMobb, 2021) | Unity |
| <i>The Resume Game</i> | (Neristhira, 2021) | Unity |
| <i>Allegra Thompson Interactive Resume</i> | (Thompson, 2021) | Unity |
| <i>Resume</i> | (lucspinto, 2022) | Unity |
| <i>Resume</i> | (ChenQQ, 2022) | Unity |
| <i>Interactive Resume v1</i> | (TKG Studios, 2022) | Unity |
| <i>Joana Margarida's Resume</i> | (Margarida, 2022) | Unknown |
| <i>Resume</i> | (shi-yh, 2023) | Unity |
| <i>RESUME</i> | (manaki_senpai, 2023) | Unity |
| <i>my digital resume</i> | (lvl_up, 2023) | Unity |
| <i>ThePirateAdventure (Resume—CV)</i> | (Matthieu, 2023) | Unity |
| <i>My Resume Game</i> | (divine1123, 2023) | Unity |
| <i>Maxime's Virtual Resume</i> | (Maxime C., 2023) | Unity |
| <i>interactive resume</i> | (containedx, 2023) | Godot |
| <i>Resume Game</i> | (KavikaSharma, 2023) | Unknown |
| <i>MeTerminal</i> | (LevyZhang, 2023) | Unknown |

Table 2. Sample of 33 game resumes.

Tool

Of the games that had an identifiable tool, all of them were developed with a game engine designed since the year 2000 to ease the developer

experience. One of them was likely to have been developed with a Java framework, and a small minority were undetermined.

Size (Playtime)

All but one of the game resumes were designed to be completed in a short period of time. Most games were completed in less than five minutes.

View

All the platformer games (~42%) presented a side-scrolling view, much like Leonardi's game. Another ~12% of games also utilized a side-scrolling view, belonging to the shooter, adventure, and beat 'em up genres. Interactive fiction, interactive resume titles, as well as the single example of a virtual pet game (~21%) presented content in a static, one-screen view. Games in the first-person format constituted ~9% of the game sample and belonged to one adventure game title and two walking simulators, the latter of which is defined by Cooke (2018) as first-person explorable environments with limited controls. The remaining ~15% assumed an overhead, top-down view as is typical with action role-playing and role-playing games.

Genre

Figure 2 presents the total distribution of game genres belonging to the sampled game resumes.

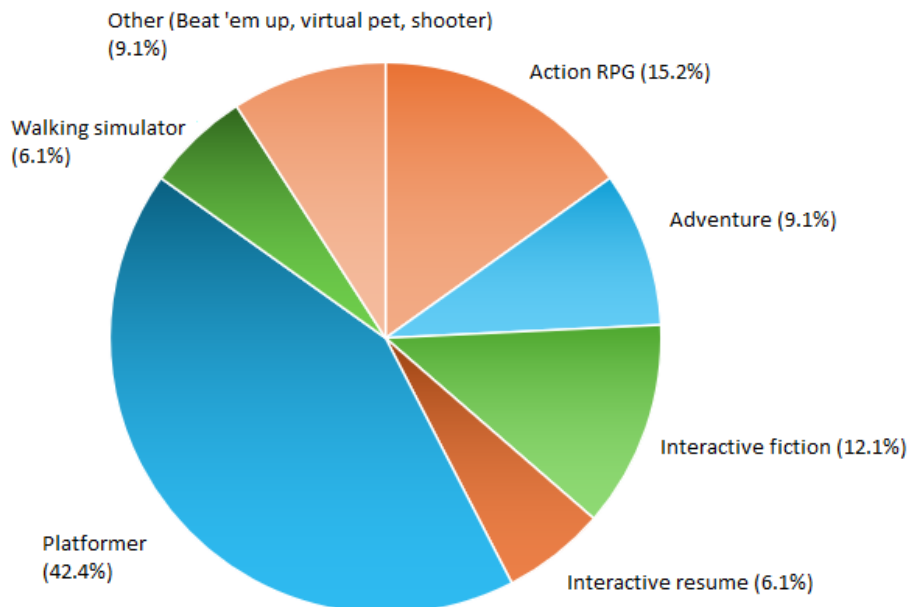


Figure 2. Breakdown of game genres represented in a sample of 33 itch.io resume-styled games.

The platformer category was the largest category of games at 42.4%. However, it is important to note that more than half (57.6%) of the sampled games belong to different genres. Action RPG category

(15.2%) is treated a bit loosely, including both action role-playing games, such as *The Legend of Zelda* (Nintendo R&D4, 1987) as well as games belonging to a more traditional RPG experience, such as *Final Fantasy* (Square, 1987). Adventure games (9.1%) include games with a point-and-click interface, such as *The Secret of Monkey Island* (LucasArts, 1990), and those that occupy a puzzle-adventure medium, such as *Myst* (Cyan, Inc., 1994), but fall short of narrative-heavy interactive fiction titles like *Colossal Cave Adventure* (Crowther, 1976). Interactive fiction and interactive resumes are 18.2% of the sample and are divided into separate categories, given the scope of this study. Walking simulators (6.1%) are immersive, first-person experiences that resemble something like the creator's personal hallway of contributions. The "Other" category represents a combination of games from less common genres (9.1%) that are too diminutive to be represented separately in the pie chart; for example, beat 'em up, virtual pet, and shooter game resumes.

As previously mentioned, there were two submissions that assumed a more traditional "interactive resume" format (bitsy, 2018; groovyMobb, 2021). These may be described as more robust resumes with clickable hyperlinks and some stylizations that are only possible with sophisticated game engines. Their fitness for this study was considered, and it was ultimately reasoned that their stylized presentations resembled enough of a game in the interactive fiction tradition to warrant their inclusion.

There were a few instances where a game resume incorporated a small mini-game that fell outside of the core game loop, but these were often very short decorative elements designed to showcase the creator's range of skills and experience. For example, the work of MoisesC contains a short basketball mini-game to conclude their platformer, revealing a banner and LinkedIn profile redirect. Iim's platformer game introduces the player to short dart-throwing and Olympic-style racing mini-games sandwiched in-between levels. Other games, such as that of Raffaele Ariano, provide powerups in their platformer level that reveal new player skills needed to advance to the next area, fundamentally transforming gameplay at every turn.

Rooms/Levels

Most platformer games are divided into distinct areas that showcase different resume content, such as an about section, work history, skills, technologies used, projects, and hobbies. Cooper Heriot's game resume, for example, is a submarine ride that takes the player through distinct ocean locations, each harbouring resume elements in a single stream of consciousness. Adventure and action role-playing games usually contain multiple explorable rooms, each adorned with separate sections of the resume. Antonio Barba's game resume looks like your typical *Zelda* clone, requiring that the player defeats all the on-screen enemies, here resembling blocks of resume content, before proceeding to the next

room. Interactive fiction games either appear in visual novel format with scenes and images (KavikaSharma, 2023) or in pure static text with prompts to branch out the narrative and reveal aspects of the player's persona in bite-sized chunks (Ms .45, 2016). Some, like the pet simulator (Cober, 2017), the slime gladiator stadium (TheDankZebra, 2019), and the space shooter (divine1123, 2023) occur in one dynamic space.

Controls

Only ~14% of platformer games boast the limited left and right navigable directions that Leonardi's original game resume showcased in 2013 (lvl_up, 2023; manaki_senpai, 2023), and one of them only works with mouse scrolling (lvl_up, 2023). Most have added the jump feature to their platformer resume (Ariano, 2021; clementineg, 2019; containedx, 2023; Iim, 2017; Kovacs, 2017; Margarida, 2022; Maxime C., 2023; MoisesC, 2020; Mostyn, 2016; Simms, 2020; Thompson, 2021), and a few provide the ability to shoot projectiles (Ariano, 2021; Heriot, 2018). The beat 'em up game (TKG Studios, 2022) employs similar controls and projectiles as platformer entries, only with a greater emphasis on combat. The solitary shooter game provides a vertical-scrolling view with left and right buttons to navigate and the space bar to shoot laser beams at incoming foes (divine1123, 2023).

The interactive fiction and interactive resume titles implement the mouse in their choice-based hyperlinked navigational systems (bitsy, 2018; groovyMobb, 2021; KavikaSharma, 2023; Ms .45, 2016). The pet simulator (Cober, 2017) also requires a mouse click on digital buttons. The remaining interactive fiction game (LevyZhang, 2023) employs a classic parser input system that harkens back to the earliest days of mainframe text adventures titles.

Lastly, action role-playing games (Barba, 2020; ishfulthinking, 2019; lucspinto, 2022; shi-yh, 2023; TheDankZebra, 2019), adventure games (HeliusCarthaxis, 2020; Youkos, 2019), and walking simulators (ChenQQ, 2022; Neristhyra, 2021) all utilize the full directional pad (up, down, left, right / A, W, S, D) to navigate. The one exception is a pirate-themed point-and-click adventure game (Matthieu, 2023) that only registers mouse clicks.

Resume Elements

Most game resumes contain all or most of the sections that one finds in a conventional resume; however, the degree of abstraction varies. Some of the game resumes provide lengthy descriptions of accomplishments that unravel upon interacting with a room tile or in-game object, while others rely more on minimalist symbolism and short blurbs to convey information. Programming framework and language icons might adorn the level (Iim, 2017; Maxime C., 2023), relying on the player's ability to infer meaning through visual representations over having the skills described in detail.

Some artifacts in the game link to external websites, social media profiles, and GitHub project profiles to grant players an opportunity to learn more about the author and their projects. In this way, game resumes act as interactive galleries of personal accomplishments and skills. Game resumes often end with an easy way of contacting the author, embedded within the game itself, such as an email button or LinkedIn hyperlink.

The individual's personality, soft skills, and character are often portrayed through art and content choices. *The Resume Game* places the player in the creator's room where they are instantly greeted with posters and objects referencing her beloved franchises and music. Past projects and specific technical skills are represented as non-playable character archetypes in Patrick Mostyn's game resume, speaking to pieces of the author's past through interactive dialogue.

Scoring and Game Elements

Scoring systems are, for the most part, either non-existent or relegated to the background as a decoration and not as a prominent design element. While approximately 20% of game resumes in this sample contain some form of scoring, none of these examples place much emphasis on scoring to complete the game. Scoring is likely another way of demonstrating competence in game design principles but serves no mechanical purpose beyond that aim.

Some of the recognizable game elements described in my qualitative data (notes) include: health bar, powerups, enemies, puzzles, inventory, targets, nonlinear storytelling, mini-games, coins, collectibles, achievements, combat, game map, non-playable characters, and quest. These game elements are reduced to serve the solitary purpose of exhibiting resume content in creative ways that remind players of gaming pastimes. An example of the decorative nature of game elements is the presence of enemies despite the player being immortal—they are there simply to accentuate the game resume and provide worldbuilding immersion. The sense of mortality and urgency is suspended in a game resume, presumably to enable a complete playthrough in a single sitting.

Some game resumes are as simple as walking through a carefully curated level of achievements and accolades with the occasional platform to jump to or obstacle to shoot down, lightly gamifying the experience. A very small subgroup of games provides legitimate threats that lead to a game over but, even in these examples, the difficulty is artificially set low. The objective appears to be getting the attention of the player within a quick span of time and providing critical details about the author and a method of contact, and all with minimal interruptions.

Creator's Profession

Basic creator profiles of game resume developers were developed so that we might begin to understand their motivations and interests. This information was often acquired through paratexts or indicated in some way within the games themselves. The creators of game resumes typically identify as candidates in search of job opportunities within the games industry, such as game developer, game designer, level designer, or sound engineer. As such, this medium appears to reside almost exclusively within the games development realm at this time. There does appear to be one notable outlier in *You always need a French Marketer* by author clementineg; however, this is one example in a sea of aspiring game developers and artists.

Conclusion

After playing all 33 games in the curated list of titles flagged "resume" and thematically analysing data results, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Game resumes are almost always created by individuals seeking employment in the games industry. This insight is in keeping with a common theme espoused by scholars regarding the appropriateness of nontraditional resumes within specific industries (Glenn, 2022; Sharp, 1995).
2. Side-scroller platformer games, in a similar spirit to the work of Robby Leonardi (Bernazzani, 2022; Deitz, 2015; deVilla, 2017; Ford, 2013; Mcneil, 2014; Siddall, 2013; Theodorou, 2021; Volk & Currier, 2020; Wang & Shyu, 2014), represent nearly half of our sample. The other half represent a diverse smattering of genres, the most popular being action role-playing games, adventure games, and interactive fiction titles, and even a few underrepresented genres such as walking simulators, a beat 'em up game, a virtual pet simulator, and a shooter game. This demonstrates a current research gap relating to this real-world phenomenon.
3. Common game conventions such as scoring, power-ups, health bars, and inventory systems are intentionally kept light or even omitted altogether. When a recognizable convention is present, it is to serve the purpose of uncovering elements belonging to the author's background; for example, collectibles and power-ups indicate programming languages learned, hobbies, and credentials. This universal design philosophy was mentioned as a theme within autobiographical games (Haggis, 2016; Werning, 2017) and is apparent also in our game resume sample.
4. Game resumes are designed to be short, offering an average run-time of less than 5 minutes, and easy to play due to player immortality. Through this, the hiring manager has an opportunity

to encounter all the author's resume components in one quick playthrough. The shortness of autobiographical games (Haggis, 2016; Bercuci, 2017) and their lower difficulty levels (Cole et al., 2020; Bercuci, 2017) provide a theoretical base that is shared with the game resume, even if this is likely their first time referenced together.

5. Game engines may be used to produce digital interactive resumes given their versatility. Whether or not these may be considered "games" is still up for debate; however, our study does document two examples of this practice. Interactive resumes arose from home office tools (Eken, 2020; Laudon, 2001; Sharp, 1995), Internet hyperlinking technologies (Goldsmith & Martin, 2009), and e-portfolios (Akter, 2017; Ali et al., 2022; Collins, 2008; Goldsmith & Martin, 2009). This study might be the first to address the game engine as a modern interactive resume tool, sans game.
6. Game resumes are closely related to autobiographical games and may even be considered spiritual successors. Where ludobiographies are used as an outlet for personal exploration, game resumes present a curated experience or showcase of an individual's background and skills for the purposes of securing employment. Both are autobiographical in nature but differ in terms of motivations and the way the author advances a personal brand.

We can answer RQ1 through a combination of outside literature as well as direct playtesting observations. Chia & Ruffino (2022), following in the steps of Gallagher (2019, 2022), recently clarified "ludobiography" as follows: "Expanding an established literary genre, ludobiographies involve the player in a novel experience that merges gaming with life-writing and has the potential to shed light on the meanings and boundaries of being human" (p. 315). The ludocalificare is a similar game experience in its manner of shedding light on the author in a very personalized, intimate way, albeit focused on work qualifications and professional experience.

Through this analysis, I may now confidently address RQ2. While many game resumes showcased on itch.io resembled Leonardi's work with the left-to-right, scrolling platformer aesthetic, some users opted to showcase their qualifications through other genres. The interest in role-playing and adventure games is quite palpable here, enshrining bits of self-narrative within top-down, micro worlds that can be explored at a leisurely pace. These new game resume layouts suggest an explosion of possibilities as the game resume seeks to find its way into the CV pile.

This richness of game types is hard to ignore—the "resume" in "game resume" appears to serve merely as the veneer over already established

genres and patterns in gaming. Just as Gallagher (2022) rejects the idea of “ludobiographies” as a genre and instead designates it as a game mode, I propose that the “ludocalificare,” or game resume, be treated similarly. These games tell a story through play and resemble something of a ludobiography. The delivery of the story is told in a piecemeal manner and through bursts of insights into the creator’s persona, much like the autobiographical games examined earlier in this study. The “game” in “game resume” is the vessel with which the story is enclosed.

Just as interactive resumes appeared out of a tech tool ecosystem that favoured accessibility over exclusivity, a similar phenomenon appeared in indie games and set the conditions for game resumes. The examples provided in this study were all created with game engines that ease the development process, unlike Leonardi’s game resume, which was programmed purely in HTML, CSS, and JavaScript. The evolution of game resumes experienced an observable quickening and heightened frequency over the years, likely due to advances in technology and diminishing demands imposed on developers. Additionally, platforms such as itch.io give a voice to everyday indie developers, making it easier than ever before to host and share projects. A candidate may simply share a link with the hiring manager along with instructions on how to play their resume. It is my opinion that this practice will continue, particularly for those in the game development field.

The availability of responsive game engines provides both advantages and challenges for job-seeking game creators. On one hand, the possibilities for making a game have multiplied and allowed an incredible range of possibilities that were once only possible with advanced expertise, a team backing the developer, financial support, and some luck. The downside to this renaissance of indie game development is that the market is now flooded with candidates to choose from, making the job search more onerous. I predict that the game resume will become a greater fixture in society as developers and designers seek creative, compelling ways to differentiate themselves from their competition. There is also the possibility of this practice being adopted within other industries, be it those adjacent to game development and design or altogether different.

One of the limitations of this study is that I only examined game resumes from one online platform (itch.io). Future research could focus on similar works shared on GitHub, requiring an investigative apparatus that is capable of uncovering examples in a highly decentralized file sharing environment. I also limited the search to the single term “resume” while ignoring other search terms as possible leads, such as “e-portfolio” and “CV,” to describe the same phenomenon. Future research should welcome a larger inclusion criterion to assess the full breadth of the craft. Lastly, there is an entirely new direction that research could take concerning the utility of game engines to produce interactive resumes that are decidedly not games. Game engines are

sufficiently capable of enriching a resume in ways that e-portfolios and early examples of interactive CVs cannot. This is an example of other professional contexts and industries being improved upon by the innovations of indie game developer communities. While the practice of sharing and playing with credentials is still in its infancy, there is still so much promise for those seeking a creative advantage in the job search.

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