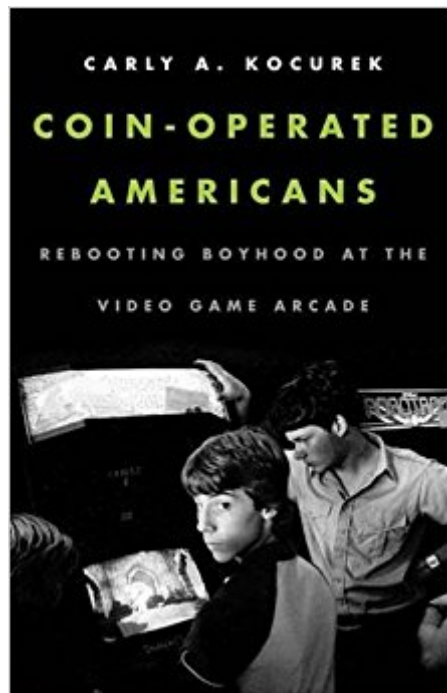




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# Coin-Operated Americans: Rebooting Boyhood At The Video Game Arcade



## Synopsis

Video gaming: it's a boy's world, right? That's what the industry wants us to think. Why and how we came to comply are what Carly A. Kocurek investigates in this provocative consideration of how an industry's craving for respectability hooked up with cultural narratives about technology, masculinity, and youth at the video arcade. From the dawn of the golden age of video games with the launch of Atari's Pong in 1972, through the industry-wide crash of 1983, to the recent nostalgia-bathed revival of the arcade, *Coin-Operated Americans* explores the development and implications of the "video gamer" as a cultural identity. This cultural-historical journey takes us to the Twin Galaxies arcade in Ottumwa, Iowa, for a close look at the origins of competitive gaming. It immerses us in video gaming's first moral panic, generated by Exidy's *Death Race* (1976), an unlicensed adaptation of the film *Death Race 2000*. And it ventures into the realm of video game films such as *Tron* and *WarGames*, in which gamers become brilliant, boyish heroes. Whether conducting a phenomenological tour of a classic arcade or evaluating attempts, then and now, to regulate or eradicate arcades and coin-op video games, Kocurek does more than document the rise and fall of a now-booming industry. Drawing on newspapers, interviews, oral history, films, and television, she examines the factors and incidents that contributed to the widespread view of video gaming as an enclave for young men and boys. A case study of this once emergent and now revived medium became the presumed enclave of boys and young men, *Coin-Operated Americans* is history that holds valuable lessons for contemporary culture as we struggle to address pervasive sexism in the domain of video games "and in the digital working world beyond.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Carly A. Kocurek provides a fascinating cultural history of arcade gaming and, in doing so, offers keen insight into our ongoing conversations around gender and gaming. This is a must read for those interested not only in game studies but in the evolution of American boyhood."âT.L. Taylor, Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
"An excellent study of the early history of the video game industry and how it came to define the gamer as male."âLibrary Journal  
"The great contribution of Kocurekâs *Coin-Operated Americans* is its attempt to historicize a relationship that often appears natural to cultural gatekeepers and other onlookers, not to mention reactionary gamers themselves."âPublic Books  
"This detailed study provides a lucid, compelling narrative that will interest a very diverse audience."âCHOICE  
"*Coin-Operated Americans* is an invaluable contribution for those interested in the intersection among media, technology, and critical questions surrounding children and youth."âJournal of the History of Childhood and Youth

Carly A. Kocurek is assistant professor of digital humanities and media studies and director of digital humanities at the Illinois Institute of Technology. Her work has appeared in journals including *Game Studies*, *Journal of Gaming and Virtual Worlds*, and *Visual Studies* and in the anthologies *Before the Crash* and *Gaming Globally*.

Really enjoyed it, and my students will be using it this fall.

*Coin-Operated Americans* by Carly A. Kocurek is a free NetGalley ebook that I began reading just after Labor Day before the start of the U of M school year. Only fair to read a book from their printing press! This book is above all an ethnography - a study of a subject during a limited range of time and places and the surrounding environment's reaction to this subject. Mostly, it was a first-person shooter vs. skill games vs. pinball debate, then topics like gamers being nerdy vs. hyper-masculine and the movies *Death Race 2000*, *Wargames*, and *Tron* being brought in to bevvy the backers of this debate.

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