

Professor uses hobby to build community

By Kylie Stamper
Staff reporter

Chess. Sorry. Monopoly. Apples to Apples. Risk. Scrabble. These are among the top 20 most popular board games of all time. We've all played these games and we know how they work. We might even have them at our houses.

Patrick Ross, professor of biology, owns all of these games and more. 756 more to be exact. Ross owns a total of 762 board games and combined with the games he's played, what he owns, and the extensions for each game the number rises to over 1,400.

He stores most of his games in the basement of his house but some find temporary homes in Beech Science Center.

Ross uses the website boardgamegeek.com to track all of the games he has played, his extensions, and the games he owns.

Ross' obsession with board games began when he was a kid. Each Christmas, Ross would get together with his family and there would always be a new game. He said, "For me, it was part of the family and connecting with brothers and sisters and my dad. As I got older I would try to seek out some kind of new, cool and exciting game to bring home for Christmas. Sometimes they were a success and sometimes they weren't."

The first game Ross remembers having around the house was Sorry. Ross claims he doesn't have a least favorite game but there is one that remains at the bottom of his list: Candyland. On the other

side, his favorite game changes constantly. He is always eager to play his newest games when he buys them. He says it's the "cult of the new." Currently he is excited to play his most recently bought game, March of the Ants.

As Ross moved into high school and college, he fell out of the gaming life but he was reintroduced to board games when he came to Southwestern. "A couple buddies pointed me towards them and I started thinking 'oh my gosh, look at all these fabulous games.' The collection got bigger and bigger and I've now incorporated them into my teaching, I've used them for outreach in the community, I do a board game meet up at the library with local kids. It's been a blast," he said.

Ed Loeb, associate professor of mathematics, is also a game collector but he collects mostly trading card games such as Pokémon and Magic. He actively uses about five different games but he owns close to 6000 individual cards.

Loeb shares Ross' passion for games. "Pat's love of board games exudes from him whenever he is around us," he said, "Dr. Ross has always been really enthusiastic about it. I heard him talk about them and I have seen him get all giddy and joyful when he brings out a new one. It's infectious and you think 'wow, that's something fun' and you want to play with him and see what kind of enjoyment you can get out of it."

Jackson Lashier, assistant professor of religion, said he started playing games with Ross when he first came to Southwestern. He



Patrick Ross, associate professor of biology, stores almost all of his 762 board games in the basement of his house. In this photo Ross piles games, of all sizes and types, every which way in a built in cabinet. They are only a small amount of the games he keeps in his basement. (Anna Ross/Courtesy photo)

said, "When I first got here, Pat came to introduce himself and through that conversation we both realized that we had a passion for board games. I enjoy playing and he said 'well gosh, we should get together and play sometime.'"

Ross and a few of his colleagues have turned their passions into something everyone can enjoy. They call it 'The Interdepartmental Ludological Luncheon' "to make it sound official," Ross said.

Loeb, Ross, Lashier, Matt Sigler, campus minister, and Nate Olivier, Dr. Carrie Lane's husband, meet once a week during lunch to relax and play various

games. Loeb said, "[Ross] brings in various games that he's found either through his trades online or going to his gaming conventions. We play a different game every week and try to work out the nuances that come with playing the games."

Although Ross has been playing his entire life, he claims he is not really much of a competitive player anymore. His colleagues disagree, to an extent. Loeb said, "He can be competitive. He's very eager to be the one to win. He's very strategic at making sure that he could find the right way to win and getting it done at just the right time. But sometimes it's a cooperative game where you work as a group to achieve some sort of goal. In those instances he's very much not competitive, he's just trying to find a way for the group to come together and solve the problem and work collectively as a whole."

Ross said the pleasure of a game should be just playing the game rather than winning. "It's goofing around with a couple of buddies, it's not winning. If the only pleasure of playing board games is winning and you're with five of your friends, then those friends are going to be having a miserable time and only one is having a good time."

That being said, Ross is still a

kid at heart. He said, "There's still something to be said about dominating a game and destroying all your friends but I tend not to do that anymore," he said.

The weekly meetings help build a sense of community within the faculty world. Loeb said, "I think it builds a rapport with us; we don't see each other that often during the day because we're all in different divisions. It builds a stronger community between the faculty when we have opportunities to meet and chat on a regular basis."

In addition to the weekly luncheons, Ross also uses board games for community outreach. On the second Saturday of each month he takes a few of his games to the Winfield Public Library. He picks games suitable for younger ages—dexterity games, smaller rule sets, attention-getting games, etc.

Each time, about a dozen kids show up to the library to play games. Joanna Brazil, youth librarian, helps organize the events. Ross is currently not offering the game days because of construction but he said, "Once that project is all done we'll be back there gaming with kids again."

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From left to right: Pat Ross, associate professor of biology, Nate Olivier, Dr. Lane's husband and Jackson Lashier, assistant professor of religion are playing the card game Machi Koro during the weekly 'Interdepartmental Ludological Luncheon.' (Kylie Stamper/Collegian photographer)