

## VIDEO GAMES

### UT creates video game archive Industry legends Garriott, Spector donating artifacts.

By Lilly Rockwell  
AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF  
Thursday, April 19, 2007

It's a good thing Richard Garriott is such a pack rat.

The legendary computer game developer has saved almost everything from his storied, three-decade career, including the original handwritten copy of the first game he ever programmed, called "Akalabeth."

Richard Garriott, a computer game developer who lives in Austin, will donate almost everything from his three-decade career, including the first computer game he designed, 'Akalabeth,' to an archive at UT's Center for American History.

The archive will include memos, PC gaming magazines from the early 1990s and old computers such as this Apple II.

It will now all go to the University of Texas. The Center for American History said Wednesday it plans to establish a massive video game archive at UT.

Thanks to recent donations from several well-known local game industry figures, including Warren Spector and music composer George Sanger, the university will be one of the first in the nation to have an extensive catalog of video- and computer-game artifacts.

"This is an industry that is many, many billions of dollars in terms of economy in this country and it's a serious business that needs documenting," said Don Carleton, director of the Center for American History.

Garriott's donations include early game script drafts, several large floppy disks from his first games, marketing materials that went inside the games— such as a "kung-fu style" headband—and the original shrink-wrap machine he used to package his early work.

"The game industry is clearly now a major industry," Garriott said. "It's also a new one. We have a unique opportunity to archive the very earliest days of this industry."



Kelly West  
AMERICAN-STATESMAN

Richard Garriott, a computer game developer who lives in Austin, will donate almost everything from his three-decade career, including the first computer game he designed, 'Akalabeth,' to an archive at UT's Center for American History.

The center still needs to raise about \$150,000 to hire an archivist before any of the items will be made available to the public. The center then wants to establish a \$3 million endowment.

The first donations contain a trove of memorabilia from some of the industry's most well-known developers.

The items stretch from mundane memos to copies of PC gaming magazines from the early 1990s and versions of games that were never released.

Composer Sanger, also known as "The Fat Man," will donate almost 30 boxes with items including his first demo cassette tape from 1983, in which he pleads with game companies to hire him. Sanger has composed songs for games such as the "Wing Commander" series and "NASCAR Racing."

Sanger said he threw away several items the day he met with history center officials.

"They told me, 'You put what in what? Take it out!' " Sanger said. He dug it out of the trash.



Garriott, the developer of the "Ultima" series, has been particularly meticulous in saving documents and memorabilia from his development career, dating back to 1979.

For every game he developed, he saved and labeled the first 10 copies. He will also donate several now-defunct Apple II computers and framed posters from every game he helped develop.

The main driver behind the archive is Spector, the head of Austin's Junction Point Studios, who received his graduate degree from UT. He sent a letter to Carleton last September, pleading his case for an archive.

"Academics need access to primary sources," Spector said in the letter. "UT could be the hub of a new and burgeoning field of academic study, one that's of growing importance."

Kelly West  
AMERICAN STATESMAN

The archive will include memos, PC gaming magazines from the early 1990s and old computers such as this Apple II.

Stanford University has a video game archive, thanks in part to the reported donation of a deceased student's collection of 25,000 games.

"It's only now that universities are beginning to pay attention in a serious way," Garriott said.

Carleton said UT isn't out to become the "No. 1" archive for video games in the country. But it does want to be the best in Texas. With nearly 100 video game companies in Dallas and Austin, UT is in a position to be a big player in documenting this burgeoning industry's history.

"I think we can be a very, very important resource for this, and we want to be a leader in everything we do," Carleton said.

The Center for American History is visited by about 15,000 people a year. It is based at UT's campus, and most of its collections are housed at Sid Richardson Hall. The center also operates two museums outside of Austin.

But the center doesn't often get the high-profile attention of UT's Harry Ransom Center, where Robert De Niro donated his memorabilia and Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein took their Watergate papers.

The history center has focused on establishing archives in niche areas such as Texas history, mathematics, the energy industry and the news media. Former TV news anchor Walter Cronkite donated his documents to the Center for American History.

"We want to have special areas that we can work in that haven't been completely covered by someone else," Carleton said.

Copyright 2007 *Austin American-Statesman*.