

CENTER CREATES NEW VIDEOGAME ARCHIVE

The Center for American History, in collaboration with leaders in the video and computer game industry, has formed the UT Videogame Archive, the newest addition to the Center's extensive Media Collection, which documents and preserves contemporary and historical media for research and educational purposes.

"Several key individuals in videogame development and related enterprises who recognize the importance of preserving the history of game development – and particularly the role that Texas has played in it – approached us last fall about establishing an archive dedicated to the evolution of the videogame industry," said Dr. Don Carleton, director of the Center for American History.

"After a series of conversations with Richard Garriott (NCsoft), Warren Spector (Junction Point Studios), George Sanger (The Fat Man and Team Fat), and Bill Bottorff (Austin Business Computers), we all agreed that the Center is the ideal home for this archive," Carleton continued. "We have an international reputation for high caliber and accessible media collections, and we are situated at the heart of the Texas videogame industry."

"The new archive will enhance the potential for collaboration among University departments with emerging videogame curricula," added Brenda Gunn, assistant director for Research and Collections. "This is a natural opportunity for the study of popular culture, art, technology, business, and the preservation of digital information to intersect on the UT campus.



L to R: Bill Bottorff, Don Carleton, Richard Garriott, Warren Spector, George Sanger, and Steve Jackson. Above: Graph paper sketch Garriott used to design an early game. Right: "Ultima Underworld," from Garriott's private collection. Photo courtesy of Tony Salvaggio.

"The UT Videogame Archive joins a number of U.S. and European initiatives already in the works to preserve material related to the industry's history," Gunn noted. "The Center's archive will enhance the global study of the videogame industry by highlighting the influence of Texas-based developers and entrepreneurs."

In its efforts to build an archive of scholarly and cultural interest, the Center plans to gather materials from all sectors of the industry. In addition to games and equipment, archival materials of interest include paper and digital documentation relating to the conception, development, planning, management, marketing, scripting, technology, design, and other aspects of the videogame arena.

More than 50 game developers, programmers, and University and City of Austin representatives, as well as individuals from organizations serving the videogame industry, launched the UT Videogame Archive at a reception hosted earlier this year by the Center.

At the event, Garriott, Spector, and Sanger announced their plans to contribute their personal materials to the new archive.

"The fact is that the history of the videogame business is being written every day and, sadly, being lost just about as quickly," said Spector. "Luckily, we're a young enough medium that nearly all of our serious practitioners are still alive and available to be interviewed and invited to contribute to the archive."

Next steps include a September 4th event to raise awareness of and financial support for the UT Videogame Archive.

"Dozens of developers right here in Austin are eager to place their material with us as soon as we have the infrastructure in place," said Carleton.

Information about the archive will be updated as available at www.utvideogamearchive.org

For an invitation to the September 4th event benefitting the new archive, email ramonakelly@austin.utexas.edu