

In Support of Proposed Class 8

Ed Fries

Former Vice President
Microsoft Game Studios

My history

- Published first games in 1982
- Joined Microsoft in 1986
- Built Microsoft's video game business and released more than 100 games including Halo, Age of Empires and Flight Simulator
- Released one of the early MMOs "Asheron's Call"
- Launched the original Xbox
- Retired as a vice president in 2004
- Commissioner at the Smithsonian American Art Museum

Video Game Preservation is Important

- The first new medium in over 100 years.
- Recognized as an art form by the Supreme Court
- > \$100B worldwide revenue – larger than books, movies, and music
- MMO games are particularly important
 - They are the first “virtual worlds”
 - They are difficult to preserve
 - They will be lost if we don’t do something
- These virtual worlds represent an evolution of the human species to living in both the physical and virtual worlds simultaneously.

My preservation work

- Repaired and documented the first arcade video game “Computer Space (1971)”
- Repaired and documented the first color arcade video game “Color Gotcha (1973)”
- Repaired and documented the first arcade racing game and the first use of a ROM chip in a video game “Gran Trak 10 (1974)”
- Documented the first Easter Egg in a video game “Starship 1 (1977)”
- Work is available at edfries.wordpress.com.

Things I've learned

- In many cases my articles are the only comprehensive sources of information on these important games.
- The companies I write about are either long gone or have been bought and sold so many times that the current owner knows nothing of their own past.
- If other preservationists and institutions don't start doing more of this work we are at risk of losing the early history of this medium.

Companies can not be relied on to preserve their own work.

- Virtually all the material culture we have from the first major video game company, Atari, comes from former employees and collectors who saved it, often from dumpsters, when the company went out of business.
- Even when companies do preserve their work they seldom make it available to researchers and museums.
- More and more games today live half on a local machine and half on a server (“in the cloud”). When the game is shut down the server part is often lost forever which means the game is lost forever.

We need proposed class 8

- Common sense extension to rules that already exist for single player and LAN games
- Libraries, archives and museums need to be able to preserve MMOs and other online video games
- Libraries, archives, and museums need to be able to enlist the help of supervised affiliates in their preservation work

Thank You

edf@halcyon.com