



Contact: Susan Trien
Strong National Museum of Play®
Rochester, New York
585-410-6359, strien@museumofplay.org

Frequently Asked Questions about the National Center for the History of Electronic Games™

What is the National Center for the History of Electronic Games?

The National Center for the History of Electronic Games (NCHEG) is dedicated to collecting, preserving, and interpreting electronic games and game forms for future generations. Located at Strong National Museum of Play® in Rochester, New York, the National Center for the History of Electronic Games houses one of the largest and most comprehensive collections of electronic game platforms and games in the United States (nearly 15,000 items).

Why did Strong National Museum of Play establish a National Center for the History of Electronic Games?

Strong National Museum of Play is the only museum anywhere devoted solely to play and the ways in which it encourages learning, creativity, and discovery and illuminates American cultural history. Electronic games are a rapidly evolving new form of play. They are having a profound effect not only on how Americans play, but also on how they learn and how they connect to each other. Therefore, the museum must explore and interpret the cultural history of electronic games and help ensure that they and related material are collected and preserved for future generations. The National Center for the History of Electronic Games is the museum's mechanism for accomplishing this.

How is the National Center for the History of Electronic Games different from other initiatives to collect and preserve electronic games?

The Center defines electronic games broadly to include video games, computer games, console games, arcade games, handheld games, and toys that combine digital and traditional play. In addition to collecting and preserving these items, the Center also collects a wide range of other electronic-game-related artifacts and archival material. In addition, the Center develops exhibits and undertakes other activities to interpret the historical and cultural significance of electronic games.

Do the preservation activities of the National Center for the History of Electronic Games include seeking ways to prevent the decay or bit rot that over time degrades floppy disks, magnetic tape, and other forms of media storage associated with electronic games?

That type of preservation work is being carried on principally through organizations and initiatives such as the Library of Congress's National Digital Information Infrastructure Preservation Project (NDIIPP) and the collaborative Preserving Digital Worlds Project funded by NDIIPP at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Stanford University, the University of Maryland, and Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT). The National Center for the History of Electronic Games interacts with activities such as those by participating in the Game Preservation Project Special Interest Group of the International Game Developers Association (IGDA), as well as other initiatives. The Center is devoted to collecting, preserving, and interpreting the broad material culture of electronic games.

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In addition to the aforementioned games and toys, what else does the Center for the History of Electronic Games collect?

In keeping with the Center's interest in the broad cultural history of electronic games, its collections encompass not only games and game platforms, but also a wide variety of other material such as packaging, advertising, publications, electronic-game-inspired consumer products, literary and popular inspirations of electronic-games imagery, historical records, personal and business papers, and other associated artifacts and documents that represent or illustrate the impact of electronic games on American life.

What is the scope of the Center's collection?

The Center's collection of electronic games and related material is among the largest public collections in the United States and arguably the most comprehensive in its diversity. It includes examples of every major video-game platform manufactured since 1972, from Magnavox Odyssey and Atari 2600 through Sony PlayStation, Microsoft Xbox, and Nintendo Wii (more than one-hundred artifacts); more than 10,000 individual video-game titles, from Atari *Space Invaders*, Nintendo NES *Super Mario Bros.*, and Sega Genesis *Sonic the Hedgehog* to Sony PlayStation *Gran Turismo* and Nintendo Wii *Sports*; examples of all significant handheld game systems from Milton Bradley Microvision and Nintendo Game Boy to Sony PSP (more than one-hundred devices); more than 2,000 children's educational games; and an extensive collection of children's toys, such as Simon, Tamagotchi, and Webkinz, that combine digital and traditional play; and much, much more.

How long has the Center been collecting electronic games?

Strong National Museum of Play has been collecting electronic games—broadly defined—since their earliest production in all forms. These efforts have grown rapidly in recent years as the number and impact of electronic games have grown.

Are the Center's collections accessible to scholars, other researchers, and the public in general either on site or online?

All the collections are accessible to researchers on site. Many are on view in museum displays and exhibits, and some are available for guests to play. Many more will be accessible in future exhibits. Meanwhile, through grants from the Institute of Museum and Library Services the museum is currently cataloging its entire collection of more than 10,000 video games and its electronic-games-related toy catalogs with the goal of making information about them accessible online.

Is the Center actively collecting additional electronic games and related material?

Yes. The Center is actively seeking additional examples of games, game platforms, handheld game systems, toys that combine digital and traditional play, and supporting material of all types, including other game-inspired consumer products, packaging, advertising, historical records, and business and personal papers related to the design and production of electronic games and their use. The Center encourages queries from individuals and organizations that have important electronic games material that merits a permanent home where it can help inform future generations.

To inquire about donating games, platforms, or other material, contact:

Jon-Paul C. Dyson, Director, National Center for the History of Electronic Games

jpdyson@museumofplay.org 585-410-6341

Eric Wheeler, Associate Curator, National Center for the History of Electronic Games

ewheeler@museumofplay.org 585/410-6398

For more information about the National Center for the History of Electronic Toys: www.ncheg.org