

## Finding Aid to the Christopher S. Weaver Papers, 1979-1989

### Summary Information

**Title:** Christopher S. Weaver papers

**Creator:** Christopher S. Weaver (primary)

**ID:** 120.1178

**Date:** 1979-1989 (inclusive)

**Extent:** 3 linear feet

**Language:** The majority of materials in this collection are in English, with a few instances of Finnish.

**Abstract:** The Christopher S. Weaver papers contain original records about and from Videomagic Laboratories, as well as other computer- and programming-related materials. The materials are dated between 1979 and 1989.

**Repository:**

Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play at The Strong  
One Manhattan Square  
Rochester, New York 14607  
585.263.2700  
library@museumofplay.org

### Administrative Information

**Conditions Governing Use:** This collection is open for research use by staff of The Strong and by users of its library and archives. Though the donor has not transferred intellectual property rights (including, but not limited to any copyright, trademark, and associated rights therein) to The Strong, he has given permission for The Strong to make copies in all media for museum, educational, and research purposes.

**Conditions Governing Access:** Access to files on laserdiscs is limited to on-site researchers; advanced notice is required. See also The Strong's Digital Game Files Access Policy.

**Custodial History:** The Christopher S. Weaver papers were donated to The Strong in March 2021 as a gift of Christopher Weaver. The papers were accessioned by The Strong under Object ID 120.1178 and were received from Weaver along with several computers, video game accessories, and marketing kits.

**Preferred citation for publication:** Christopher S. Weaver papers, Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play at The Strong

**Processed by:** Julia Novakovic, May-June 2022

### Controlled Access Terms

#### Personal Names

- Weaver, Christopher S.

**Corporate Names**

- Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- Media Technology Associates
- Videomagic Laboratories

**Subjects**

- Computer simulation
- Electronic games industry
- Game design and development
- Laserdiscs
- Optical disks
- Simulation games
- Videomagic Laboratories

**Biographical Note**

Christopher S. Weaver is an American educator, software developer, and entrepreneur.

Prior to founding Bethesda Softworks in 1986, Weaver was a technology forecaster, television communications engineer, and co-founder of Videomagic Laboratories. At Videomagic Laboratories, engineers produced the first commercial videodisc-based environment simulator; they also developed core technologies which allowed users to interact with a display screen and edit interactive video. Though that company shuttered in 1985, Weaver's experience in commercial development paved the way for future endeavors. Bethesda Softworks, entirely self-funded, launched its first PC game in 1986. Over the next decade, Bethesda developed and published hit titles like *Wayne Gretzky Hockey* (1988), *The Terminator* (1991), and *The Elder Scrolls: Arena* (1994). In 1999, Weaver and Robert A. Altman cofounded ZeniMax Media as a new parent company for Bethesda. Weaver shifted into the role of Chief Technology Officer and later left the company in 2002. (ZeniMax was later acquired by Microsoft in 2021.)

Weaver has more than 30 years of experience in the computer software and telecommunications industries. Since 1998, Weaver has been a Research Scientist and Lecturer in both Comparative Media Studies and Materials Science and Engineering at MIT; he is also a Distinguished Professor of Computational Media at Wesleyan University. Weaver is the Chairman of the Video Game Pioneers Initiative Advisory Board at the Smithsonian Institution and serves on committees for various national and international educational organizations. His current work explores the use of interactive media in education and simulation.

**Collection Scope and Content Note**

The Christopher S. Weaver papers are a compilation of original records from and about Videomagic Laboratories, as well as other computer- and programming-related reference materials. Documentation includes business plans, proposals, technical papers, notes, sketches, logs, memos, research materials, and laserdiscs. The bulk of the materials are dated between 1982 and 1985.

The Christopher S. Weaver papers have been arranged into two series, one of which has been further divided into subseries. The collection is housed in four archival document boxes and one large audiovisual materials box.

**System of Arrangement**

Series I: Videomagic Laboratories records, 1982-1985

Subseries A: Company documentation

Subseries B: Laserdiscs

Series II: Reference materials, 1979-1989

## Contents List

### Series I: Videomagic Laboratories records, 1982-1985

**Scope and Content Note:** This series contains paper documentation and laserdiscs from Videomagic Laboratories, a company which developed laserdisc technology and applications for the first part of the 1980s. (Videomagic Laboratories' product development included simulation systems, point-of-sale and point-of-information terminals, education systems, and arcade games.) Within this series are company records, technical proposals, design documentation, and laserdiscs.

#### Subseries A: Company documentation

**Scope and Content Note:** This subseries holds materials created by Videomagic Laboratories between 1982 and 1985. Records include meeting notes, technical specification documents, schematics, wiring diagrams, reports, proposals, correspondence, memos, sketches, brochures, and more.

#### Box 1

- Folder 1 Videomagic Laboratories – brochures, n.d. [c. 1983-1984] [5 copies]
- Folder 2 Videomagic Laboratories – business plan summaries, n.d. [c. 1983-1984]
- Folder 3 Videomagic Laboratories – technical meeting notes, 1983-1984
- Folder 4 Videomagic Laboratories – general partnership correspondence, agreements, and notes; 1982-1984 and n.d.
- Folder 5 Videomagic Laboratories – Hitachi – technical questions, notes, and letter; 1983-1984
- Folder 6 Videomagic Laboratories – employee documentation and memos, 1983-1984
- Folder 7 Videomagic Laboratories – employment agreement template, n.d. [c. 1980s]
- Folder 8 Videomagic Laboratories – “Media Technology Associates, Inc. and the Videodisc Arcade Game: Introduction to a Proposed Venture,” March 2, 1982
- Folder 9 Videomagic Laboratories – “Proposal for a Videodisc Arcade Game Venture,” June 23, 1982
- Folder 10 Videomagic Laboratories – “Supporting Documentation for Videomagic’s Proposal to Produce a Videodisc Arcade Game,” July 8, 1982
- Folder 11 Videomagic Laboratories – “Preliminary Term Sheet,” September 2, 1982
- Folder 12 Videomagic Laboratories – “Specification Document – Tank Gunnery Trainer,” May 3, 1984
- Folder 13 Videomagic Laboratories – “A Proposal for a Tank Gunnery and Driving Simulation,” November 12, 1984
- Folder 14 Videomagic Laboratories – “Technical Specification Document,” 1984
- Folder 15 Videomagic Laboratories – game production documentation, notes, and memos; 1983-1984 and n.d.
- Folder 16 Videomagic Laboratories – arcade game unit sketches, n.d. [c. 1983-1984]
- Folder 17 Videomagic Laboratories – standalone arcade game unit delivery requirements, August 5, 1984
- Folder 18 Videomagic Laboratories – “Point-of-Purchase and Training Demonstrations” product descriptions, September 20, 1984
- Folder 19 Videomagic Laboratories – telemerchandising report and notes, 1984

- Folder 20 Videomagic Laboratories – “Pan/Scroll Patent Application” – notes, application, and legal correspondence; 1983-1985
- Folder 21 Videomagic Laboratories – Clock Regenerator/Data Slicer writing diagrams/schematics, n.d. [c. 1980s]
- Folder 22 Videomagic Laboratories – CPU/Peripheral Board wiring diagrams/schematics, n.d. [c. 1980s]
- Folder 23 Videomagic Laboratories – Digital Decoder Board wiring diagrams/schematics, n.d. [c. 1980s]

**Box 2**

- Folder 1 Videomagic Laboratories – “Test Disc I” sketches and notes, n.d. [c. 1983-1984]
- Folder 2 Videomagic Laboratories – “Test Disc II” shoot script, edit logs, notes, and sketches; 1983
- Folder 3 Videomagic Laboratories – “Test Disc III Budget” memos, notes, and sketches; 1983 and n.d.
- Folder 4 Videomagic Laboratories – “Test Disc III” printouts, notes, and sketches; 1983-1984
- Folder 5 Videomagic Laboratories – “Test Disc IIIa” letters, specifications, and notes; 1983
- Folder 6 Videomagic Laboratories – “Test Disc IIIb” event log, sketches, and notes; 1984
- Folder 7 Videomagic Laboratories – “Test Disc IV” slide catalog order, log, and notes; n.d. [c. 1983-1984]
- Folder 8 Videomagic Laboratories – “Test Disc IVb” logs, notes, memos, directory, sketches, and reference; 1984 and n.d.
- Folder 9 Videomagic Laboratories – various notes, schematics, wiring diagrams, and reference; 1983-1984 and n.d.
- Folder 10 Videomagic Laboratories – “Touch Targets” specification document, n.d. [c. 1980s]
- Folder 11 Videomagic Laboratories – “Automated Technical Information Conference,” Dept. of the Air Force, letter and conference schedule, 1984
- Folder 12 Videomagic Laboratories – “Strategic Recommendations for VML,” Christopher Weaver, November 28, 1984
- Folder 13 Videomagic Laboratories – “VML Technical Development Issues,” C.S. Weaver, with notes, 1984 and n.d.
- Folder 14 Videomagic Laboratories – “Financial Statements Fiscal Year 1984,” 1st and 2nd quarters, 1984
- Folder 15 Videomagic Laboratories – inventory appraisal, auction catalog, notes, and accounting sheets; 1983-1985

**Subseries B: Laserdiscs**

**Scope and Content Note:** This subseries houses 28 laserdiscs from Videomagic Laboratories. Titles on the discs and enclosures indicate these are related to documentation on “test discs” located in Box 2.

**AV Box 1**

- Object 1 Laserdisc: Scotch Videodisc, “19, Test Disc I, for Research Purposes, Internal Use Only” [label: “property of Videomagic Laboratories, Trade Secret”], n.d. [c. 1983-1984]
- Object 2 Laserdisc: Scotch Videodisc, “20, Test Disc I, for Research Purposes, Internal Use Only” [label: “property of Videomagic Laboratories, Trade Secret”], n.d. [c. 1983-1984]
- Object 3 Laserdisc: Scotch Videodisc, “40, Test Disc II” [label: “property of Videomagic Laboratories, Trade Secret”], n.d. [c. 1983-1984]
- Object 4 Laserdisc: Scotch Videodisc, “64, Test Disc II” [label: “property of Videomagic Laboratories, Trade Secret”], n.d. [c. 1983-1984]
- Object 5 Laserdisc: Scotch Videodisc, “65, Test Disc II” [label: “property of Videomagic Laboratories, Trade Secret”], n.d. [c. 1983-1984]
- Object 6 Laserdisc: Universal Pioneer LaserDisc, “70, UPC Test Disc B1” [with papers taped to outer sleeve], n.d. [c. 1983-1984]
- Object 7 Laserdisc: Universal Pioneer LaserDisc, “81, UPC Test Disc B1” [with papers taped to outer sleeve], n.d. [c. 1983-1984]
- Object 8 Laserdisc: Universal Pioneer LaserDisc, “106, Old Pioneer Videodisc, (this test has good action packed ‘live’ video)” [also has photos taped to outer sleeve], n.d. [c. 1983-1984]
- Object 9 Laserdisc: Scotch Videodisc, “510, VML Test Disc III” [label: “property of Videomagic Laboratories, Trade Secret”], n.d. [c. 1983-1984]
- Object 10 Laserdisc: Scotch Videodisc, “622, VML Demo III” [label: “property of Videomagic Laboratories, Trade Secret”], n.d. [c. 1983-1984]
- Object 11 Laserdisc: Scotch Videodisc, “623, VML Demo III” [label: “property of Videomagic Laboratories, Trade Secret”], n.d. [c. 1983-1984]
- Object 12 Laserdisc: Hitachi Laser Video Disc, “#701, Video Magic Skip Frame Test,” n.d. [c. 1983-1984]
- Object 13 Laserdisc: Hitachi Laser Video Disc, “#703, Test Disk for Videomagic made by Hitachi, Test Disc IIIb,” n.d. [c. 1983-1984]
- Object 14 Laserdisc: Hitachi Laser Video Disc, “#705, Company Demo” [no outer sleeve], n.d. [c. 1983-1984]
- Object 15 Laserdisc: Scotch Videodisc, “#706, Vision Machine Rus Gant”/ “VMR Electronic Archive,” n.d. [c. 1983-1984]
- Object 16 Laserdisc: Scotch Videodisc, “804, VML Garage Rushes, Levels Main, A, B, C, 4-7-84” [label: “property of Videomagic Laboratories, Trade Secret”], 1984
- Object 17 Laserdisc: Scotch Videodisc, “805, VML Garage Rushes, Levels Main, A, B, C, 4-7-84” [label: “property of Videomagic Laboratories, Trade Secret”], 1984
- Object 18 Laserdisc: Scotch Videodisc, “806, VML Garage Rushes Levels Main, A, B, C, 4-7-84,” [label: “property of Videomagic Laboratories, Trade Secret”], 1984
- Object 19 Laserdisc: Scotch Videodisc, “1000, VML Demo Disc IV, Garage Level A P.O.S. Demo,” n.d. [c. 1983-1984]

- Object 20 Laserdisc: Scotch Videodisc, "1001, VML Demo Disc IV Garage Level A P.O.S. Demo" [no outer sleeve], n.d. [c. 1983-1984]
- Object 21 Laserdisc: Scotch Videodisc, "1016, VML Demo Disc IV, Garage Level A P.O.S. Demo," n.d. [c. 1983-1984]
- Object 22 Laserdisc: Scotch Videodisc, "1017, VML Demo Disc IV, Garage Level A P.O.S. Demo," n.d. [c. 1983-1984]
- Object 23 Laserdisc: Scotch Videodisc, "1102, VML Test Disc IV-B, Level A/P.O.S./Data," n.d. [c. 1983-1984]
- Object 24 Laserdisc: Scotch Videodisc, "1103, VML Test Disc IV-B, Level A/P.O.S./Data," n.d. [c. 1983-1984]
- Object 25 Laserdisc: Scotch Videodisc, "1118, VML Test Disc IV-B, Level A/P.O.S./Data," n.d. [c. 1983-1984]
- Object 26 Laserdisc: Scotch Videodisc, "1403, Test Disc V, Full Frame Digital Data" [label: "property of Videomagic Laboratories, Trade Secret"], n.d. [c. 1983-1984]
- Object 27 Laserdisc: Scotch Videodisc, "1404, Test Disc V Full Frame Digital Data," n.d. [c. 1983-1984]
- Object 28 Laserdisc: Pioneer Video Inc. LaserDisc, "08264, Testdisc I For Research Only Internal Use Only" [no outer sleeve], n.d. [c. 1983-1984]

## Series II: Reference materials, 1979-1989

**Scope and Content Note:** This series holds reference materials acquired by Weaver, including sell sheets, system details, reports, newsletters, and more.

### Box 3

- Folder 1 Reference – CBS Teletext system details, petition, and statement; 1979-1980
- Folder 2 Reference – CBS Teletext Field Tests, Phases 1, 2, and 3; 1979-1980
- Folder 3 Reference – Videotex Service specifications document, 1980
- Folder 4 Reference – "The Allocation of the Radio Spectrum," Charles Lee Jackson, *Scientific American*, Vol. 242, No. 2, February 1980
- Folder 5 Reference – "Introduction to Videodisc Systems, Production, and Market Development," A Report Prepared for Corporation for Public Broadcasting, John Carey, Forrester Productions, 1981
- Folder 6 Reference – "Digital Data Bases on Optical Videodiscs," Eric Stewart Brown, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, May 1981
- Folder 7 Reference – "The Authority of Optical Videodiscs with Digital Data," Steven Edward Yelick, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, June 1982
- Folder 8 Reference – Hazeltine ESPRIT II video display terminal reference manual, September 1982
- Folder 9 Reference – "Leisure Time: Home Video Games" market research report, L.F. Rothschild, Unterberg, Towbin, November 17, 1982
- Folder 10 Reference – "Optical Publishing," Massachusetts Institute of Technology, January 1983
- Folder 11 Reference – "Bill D's Raster Scaling Program" printout and sketch, 1983
- Folder 12 Reference – Concept AVT Reference Card, Concept AVT-APL Reference Card; Human Designed Systems, 1983
- Folder 13 Reference – Elographics, Inc. sell sheets and brochure, 1983

- Folder 14 Reference – Technology products fliers and sell sheets, 1983-1984 and n.d.
- Folder 15 Reference – Uniforum conference information and Unix user group newsletters, 1983-1984
- Folder 16 Reference – Whitesmiths C compilers newsletter, brochure, and letter; 1984

**Box 4**

- Folder 1 Reference – Philips Subsystems and Peripherals sell sheet/catalog kit, 1985
- Folder 2 Reference – DaTor Commodore Magazine, 9-89 and 10-89; 1989 [in Finnish]
- Folder 3 Reference – “Problem: A Patient Encounter with Roger Tuchmann by J. Mazur” and “Problem: Master Action List,” Southern Illinois University School of Medicine, n.d. [c. 1981?]