

Finding Aid to the Brian Fargo Papers, 1981-2012

Summary Information

Title: Brian Fargo papers

Creator: Brian Fargo (primary)

ID: 116.4504

Date: 1981-2012 (inclusive); 1983-2000 (bulk)

Extent: 4.25 linear feet

Language: The materials in this collection are primarily in English. There are some instances of French; these are denoted in the Contents List section of this finding aid.

Abstract: The Brian Fargo papers are a compilation of personal notes, corporate records, and game design documentation from Fargo's time at Boone and Interplay. The bulk of the materials are dated between 1983 and 2000.

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.

Custodial History: The Brian Fargo papers were donated to The Strong in August 2016 as a gift from Brian Fargo. The papers were accessioned by The Strong under Object ID 116.4504 and were received from Fargo in two boxes, an envelope, and a rolled tube.

Preferred citation for publication: Brian Fargo papers, Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play at The Strong

Processed by: Julia Novakovic, January 2017

Controlled Access Terms

Personal Names

- Cranford, Michael
- Fargo, Brian
- Heineman, Bill
- Heineman, Rebecca
- Patel, Jay
- Stackpole, Michael A.
- Worrell, Troy

Corporate Names

- Activision (Firm)
- Boone Corporation
- Interplay Entertainment Corporation
- Interplay Productions

Subjects

- Bard's Tale (Computer game)
- Bard's Tale II (Computer game)
- Bard's Tale III (Computer game)
- Computer adventure games
- Computer games
- Computer games industry
- Dragon Wars (Computer game)
- Game design and development
- Games--software
- Mindshadow (Computer game)

Biographical Note

Brian Fargo (1962–) is an American video game designer, producer, programmer, and founder of Interplay Productions and inXile Entertainment.

Fargo grew up in California, a fan of fiction, comics, and role-playing games such as Dungeons & Dragons. In 1977, he received an Apple II computer and soon learned to program video games with his friend Michael Cranford. Fargo self-published and marketed his first widely-distributed adventure game, *The Demon's Forge* (1981) through his one-man studio, Saber Software. A Stanford graduate, Michael Boone, wished to break into the video game industry in 1982 and bought Fargo's Saber Software, establishing Boone Corporation. Fargo joined Boone as the head of research and development. In 1983, Fargo left Boone and founded Interplay Productions, taking some former Boone programmers (including Rebecca Heineman) with him.

Activision published Interplay's first game, *Mindshadow*, in 1984, to much acclaim. Fargo worked as a writer on several of Interplay's titles, including *Tales of the Unknown: Volume I - The Bard's Tale* (1985) and *The Bard's Tale II: The Destiny Knight* (1986). (He went on to produce and direct other iconic Interplay titles, such as *Wasteland*, *Dragon Wars*, and *Fallout*.) In 1988, Interplay transitioned from being solely a game developer to a development and publishing firm. As a result, Interplay published its own games as well as externally-created ones. The company grew to more than 600 employees at its peak. In 1998, Interplay Productions changed its name to Interplay Entertainment Corporation after going public. Following a majority acquisition of Interplay by Titus Software in 2000, Fargo resigned from the company.

In 2002, Fargo established inXile Entertainment, a company which develops interactive entertainment software for all popular game systems and wireless devices. Since 2012, inXile has successfully raised money for video game development projects through the crowd-funding site Kickstarter. Fargo continues to be active in the video game industry.

Collection Scope and Content Note

The Brian Fargo papers are a compilation of personal and professional papers, including materials from Fargo's time at Boone and Interplay. This collection contains game development documentation, correspondence, legal papers, financial documents, marketing materials, photographs, floppy disks, external game proposals, notes, and more. The bulk of the materials are dated between 1985 and 2000. Additional scope and content information can be found in the Contents List section of this finding aid.

The Brian Fargo papers have been arranged into two series, both of which have been further divided into subseries. The materials are housed in eight archival document boxes and one oversized folder.

System of Arrangement

Series I: Personal papers, 1983-2012

Subseries A: Notebooks and planners

Subseries B: Publicity

Series II: Professional papers, 1981-2000

Subseries A: Game development

Subseries B: Correspondence

Subseries C: Financial documents

Subseries D: Legal papers

Subseries E: Historical information and photographs

Contents List

Series I: Personal papers, 1983-2012

Subseries A: Notebooks and planners

Scope and Content Note: This subseries contains personal planning diaries, yearly planners, calendar pages, and notebooks from Fargo. Topics include meeting times, notes on games, notes on companies, and other personal events. The dates covered in these materials range between 1984 and 2001 (though 1985 is not included and some monthly calendar pages are sparse).

Box 1

- Folder 1 Brian Fargo planning diary/yearly planner with notes, 1984
- Folder 2 Brian Fargo planning diary/yearly planner with notes, 1986
- Folder 3 Brian Fargo planning diary/yearly planner with notes, 1987
- Folder 4 Brian Fargo planning diary/yearly planner with notes, 1989
- Folder 5 Brian Fargo planning diary/yearly planner with notes, 1990
- Folder 6 Brian Fargo planning diary/yearly planner with notes, 1991
- Folder 7 Brian Fargo planning diary/yearly planner with notes, 1992
- Folder 8 Brian Fargo monthly calendar pages, January 1992-July 2001
- Folder 9 Brian Fargo notebook, January 1999-July 2000
- Folder 10 Brian Fargo notebook, n.d. [c. 1994-1995?]
- Folder 11 Brian Fargo address book, n.d. [c. 1986-1992?]

Subseries B: Publicity

Scope and Content Note: This subseries houses Fargo's notes for presentations and speeches, as well as published newspaper and magazine articles featuring Fargo.

Box 2

- Folder 1 Notes for presentations and speeches, 1993 and n.d. [c. 1990s]
- Folder 2 Publicity - Brian Fargo, newspaper and magazine articles, 1983-2012

Series II: Professional papers, 1981-2000

Scope and Content Note: This series holds materials relating to Fargo's time at both Boone Corp. (early 1980s) and Interplay (1983-2000). Materials in this series include game design documents, correspondence, agreements, legal papers, financial documentation, publicity materials, and photographs.

Subseries A: Game development

Scope and Content Note: This subseries contains game design documentation for Interplay titles, as well as external game submissions for both Boone Corp. and Interplay. Materials include notes, edits, sketches, flow-charts, code print-outs, draft manuals, correspondence, agreements, schedules, reference, and original 5¼" floppy disks. Of note are design documents for *The Demon's Forge*, Fargo's first widely-distributed graphical adventure game (later re-issued by Boone Corp.) and sequels to Interplay's popular *The Bard's Tale*.

Box 2

- Folder 3 Product development process manual, Interplay, 1996 [with International Title Report, 1996]
- Folder 4 Interplay Product Development Royalty Program, January 2000
- Folder 5 "The Bard's Tale - Amiga" - notes, memos, correspondence, and edits; 1986
- Folder 6 "Bard's II/Destiny Knight" - game design documentation, notes, edits, correspondence, agreements, schedules, and print-outs; 1985-1988
- Folder 7 "Bard's III/Beyond the Bard's Tale" - game description, notes, edits, correspondence, and reference; 1987 and n.d.
- Folder 8 "Bard's III/Beyond the Bard's Tale" - game description, notes, edits, floppy disk, correspondence, and draft manual; 1987 and n.d.
- Folder 9 "Checkmate" - agreement and correspondence, 1990-1991
- Folder 10 "Crossbones" - game description, notes, and edits; 1986-1987
- Folder 11 "The Demon's Forge" - sketches, flow charts, review clippings, booklet, and print-outs; 1981-1982 and n.d.

Box 3

- Folder 1 "Ennio: The Legend" - game description, notes, print-outs, edits, and agreements; 1984 and n.d.
- Folder 2 "Executive Golf/Pebble Beach Golf" - game description, notes, sketches, correspondence, and reference; 1982-1985
- Folder 3 "Isis" - game notes and flowcharts, 1983 and n.d.
- Folder 4 "Killer Chess" - agreements and correspondence, 1987-1989
- Folder 5 "Lexi-Cross" - previous company correspondence, contracts, notes, and agreements; 1990-1991
- Folder 6 "Mindshadow" - game description, notes, sketches, and flowcharts; 1984 and n.d.
- Folder 7 "Mindshadow" - correspondence with Activision and associated edits, 1984 and n.d.
- Folder 8 "Mindshadow" program code print-out ["Mindshadow"], n.d. [c. 1984?]
- Folder 9 "Mindshadow" program code print-out ["Scenario 1: The Beach"], n.d. [c. 1984?]
- Folder 10 "Model Builder" - game description, notes, print-outs, edits, correspondence, and reference; 1995

Folder 11 "The Moon is a Harsh Mistress" - game description, notes, agreements, and floppy disks; 1987

Box 4

Folder 1 "Plane Scape Last Rites" product review packet, 1997
Folder 2 "Project X/Dragon Wars" - game description, notes, sketches, edits, correspondence, and agreements; 1988-1990 and n.d.
Folder 3 "Project X/Dragon Wars" - photographs and floppy disks, n.d.
Folder 4 "Psy-Phy" game description, Interplay, n.d. [satire?]
Folder 5 "Shadow Snare/Bard's Tale" - game description, notes, edits, draft manual, agreements, and correspondence; 1985-1987
Folder 6 "Software Studio" - notes, sketches, script, storyboards, and floppy disks; 1984-1986 and n.d.
Folder 7 "Software Studio" - correspondence, draft manuals, and draft agreements; 1984-1986

Box 5

Folder 1 "Storyteller" - game description, notes, correspondence, and agreements; 1985-1991
Folder 2 "Swords & Serpents/Behemoth" - game description, notes, edits, correspondence, and agreements; 1989-1990 and n.d.
Folder 3 "Track Meet" - game description, notes, trademark research reports, and projections; 1990-1991
Folder 4 "TROG" - correspondence, agreements, and notes; 1990-1991
Folder 5 "Bard's Tale for Macintosh" schedule and agreements, 1987-1988
Folder 6 "Bard's Tale III" schedule for 1988; 1985 [?]
Folder 7 "Chess" schedule for 1987-1989; 1985 and 1987 [?]
Folder 8 "Neuromancer" schedule for 1988-1989; 1985 [?]
Folder 9 Game description and proposal document - "Fallout Extreme," 2000
Folder 10 Game submissions - "Alien Lingo," Irene _____, n.d.
Folder 11 Game submissions - "Arena," Troy Miles, 1984
Folder 12 Game submissions - "Bowling," unidentified creator, 1984
Folder 13 Game submissions - "Bubble, Bubble, Toil, and Trouble," unidentified creator, n.d.
Folder 14 Game submissions - "Canvas Falcons," Doug Barnett, n.d. [c. 1986?]
Folder 15 Game submissions - "The Four Cities," unidentified creator, n.d.
Folder 16 Game submissions - "Gold Digger," Bert Edward Robinson, n.d. [c. 1983?]
Folder 17 Game submissions - "John Shade, Psychic Detective in Premonition of Doom," Subway Software [Arnie Katz, Bill Kunkel, and Joyce Worley], n.d.
Folder 18 Game submissions - "Master Home Planner," unidentified creator, n.d.
Folder 19 Game submissions - "Mines & Mountains," unidentified creator, n.d.
Folder 20 Game submissions - "Top of the World," Harold Schneider, 1984
Folder 21 Game submissions - "Trobots," Stacy and Neil McInnis, 1983
Folder 22 Game submissions - "The Twilight Zone," Intellisoft, 1986
Folder 23 Game submissions - Miscellaneous game notes, n.d. [c. 1980s?]
Folder 24 Game development - Miscellaneous notes and agreements, 1986-1989

- Folder 25 “5 on 5 Apple & C64 Royalty Projections at Interplay,” n.d.
Folder 26 Miscellaneous 5¼” floppy disks, n.d.

Subseries B: Correspondence

Scope and Content Note: This subseries houses professional correspondence from Interplay. Two folders contain information on the investment and later acquisition of Interplay Entertainment Corp. by France-based Titus Software. Also within this subseries are consumer letters to the designer and companies who co-developed *The Bard’s Tale* and *The Bard’s Tale II*.

Box 6

- Folder 1 Correspondence - MCA Enterprises [with notes and draft agreements], 1993
Folder 2 Correspondence - Sir-Tech [with notes and reference], 2000
Folder 3 Correspondence - Thomas Throop/Great Games Products [bridge game] [with agreement copies], 1990-1991
Folder 4 Correspondence - Titus [with notes and draft agreements], 1999-2000 [some in French]
Folder 5 Correspondence - Titus [with notes and draft agreements], 2000 [some in French]
Folder 6 Consumer letters to Interplay/Michael Cranford/Electronic Arts, “Bard’s Tale” and “Bard’s Tale II,” 1986-1987
Folder 7 Correspondence - Miscellaneous, 1988-1995

Subseries C: Financial documents

Scope and Content Note: This subseries holds financial reports, audit information, projections, sales numbers, and other information from Interplay.

Box 7

- Folder 1 Interplay 1991 Financials - reports and financial information, 1991
Folder 2 Interplay 1992 Financials - reports, audits, and analyses; 1992-1993
Folder 3 Interplay 1993 Financials - reports, audits, and analyses; 1993-1994
Folder 4 Interplay “Consolidated Financial Statement, as of April 30, 1995, and 1994, with Auditor’s Report,” 1995
Folder 5 Interplay 2000 Financials - reports and analyses, 2000
Folder 6 Interplay “Royalty Summary” binder contents - awards list, royalty advances, products shipped, price lists, and bundling titles; 1994-1996

Subseries D: Legal papers

Scope and Content Note: Within this subseries are contracts, amendments, and legal correspondence. Also included here is documentation provided by Interplay to bankruptcy court as a creditor of Mediagenic (a.k.a. Activision) in 1991-1992.

Box 8

- Folder 1 Interplay/Activision contracts, 1984-1990
Folder 2 Interplay/Electronic Arts contracts and amendments, 1985-1987
Folder 3 Mediagenic [a.k.a. Activision] bankruptcy documentation [correspondence, notes, evidence, and copies of legal documents], 1989-1993

Subseries E: Historical information and photographs

Scope and Content Note: This subseries contains press kits, press releases, presentation print-outs, and an annual report from Interplay. Photographs of staff members from Interplay are included here. Finally, a poster for a Boone Corp. game (*Crater Raider*) is also part of this subseries.

Box 8

- Folder 4 Interplay company profile sheet, n.d. [c. 1993-1994]
- Folder 5 Interplay 10th Anniversary press kit [with fliers and product press releases], 1993
- Folder 6 Interplay publicity portfolio contents, 1996-1997
- Folder 7 Interplay offering highlights presentation print-outs with notes, n.d. [c. 1998-1999]
- Folder 8 Interplay Entertainment Corp. 1999 Annual Report, 2000
- Folder 9 Interplay "Safe Harbor" presentation print-outs, 2000 [2 copies]
- Folder 10 Photographs, Interplay, c. 1980s-1996 and n.d.

Oversized

- Folder 1 *Crater Raider* poster, Boone Corp., 1983