

**Finding Aid to the
Laine Nooney Sierra On-Line Collection, 1983-1993, 2015**

Summary Information

Title: Laine Nooney Sierra On-Line collection

Creator: Laine Nooney

ID: 115.85

Date: 1983-1993, 2015 (inclusive); 1986-1991 (bulk)

Extent: 0.75 linear feet

Language: The materials in this collection contain mostly English, with one item containing Japanese.

Abstract: The Laine Nooney Sierra On-Line collection is a compilation of company documents, game maps, game pitches, game codes, art, photographs, slides, and temporarily restricted oral histories from past employees of Sierra On-Line. Laine Nooney, games historian and post-doctorate researcher at New York University, collected these in the course of her research.

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 Access: The oral history transcriptions which are part of this collection will not be available for public use until June 2021.

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, she has given permission for The Strong to make copies in all media for museum, educational, and research purposes.

Custodial History: The Laine Nooney Sierra On-Line collection was donated to The Strong in January 2015 as a gift from Laine Nooney. The papers were accessioned by The Strong under Object ID 115.85 and were received from Nooney in one box. Nooney sent restricted transcriptions of oral histories to The Strong in 2016; additional restricted oral history transcriptions are expected to arrive in 2016.

Preferred citation for publication: Laine Nooney Sierra On-Line collection, Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play at The Strong

Processed by: Robert Ramos, February 2016

Revision Note: The oral history transcriptions in this collection were restricted in May 2016, with a tentative release date set for June 2021. [Julia Novakovic, May 2016]

Controlled Access Terms

Personal Names

- Carlson, Dale
- Walls, Jim
- Williams, John
- Williams, Ken
- Williams, Roberta

Corporate Names

- IBM Personal Computer Company
- Sierra Entertainment, Inc.
- Sierra On-Line, Inc.
- US Sprint

Subjects

- Electronic games industry--United States
- Electronic games--History
- Game design and development
- Sierra On-Line, Inc.
- Video games--History

Historical Note

Laine Nooney is a video games historian and post-doctorate researcher at New York University. She is also an Assistant Professor of Digital Media at the Georgia Institute of Technology. During the course of her research, Nooney conducted oral histories with past employees of Sierra On-Line in 2014, while also acquiring the archival materials which comprise this collection.

On-Line Systems was founded in 1979 by Ken and Roberta Williams, later adopting the name Sierra On-Line in 1982. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Sierra released many significant games that changed the way home computers entertained the public, such as *King's Quest* and *Police Quest*. In 1991, Sierra began The ImagiNation Network, a hub for online gamers to connect, play, chat, and post with one another, revolutionizing the home gaming experience well before massive online multiplayer games existed. In 1996, Sierra On-Line was sold to CUC International for a price of \$1.5 billion, and a year later, Ken and Roberta Williams left the company.

CUC International then merged with HFS Incorporated in 1997, forming the Cendant Corporation. During the following years, Sierra On-Line restructured itself multiple times to adapt its focus to the consumer gaming market, while also ceasing to be a developer of games and becoming a publisher of games. Eventually Sierra was taken under Vivendi Games, which then merged with Activision to form Activision Blizzard, which is the current parent company of Sierra Entertainment today. Sierra is now responsible for reviving older games of Activision Blizzard, while also working on smaller projects.

Collection Scope and Content Note

This collection contains historic archival materials from former employees of Sierra On-Line, as well as temporarily restricted transcripts of oral histories of former employees of Sierra On-Line. Document types include production schedules, publicity information, game proposals, quality assurance programming charts, slides, and other internal documentation relating to Sierra On-Line. The archival materials were the property of Jim Walls, designer of the game *Police Quest*, and Dale Carlson, a former Sierra executive; the majority of materials belonged to Carlson. The bulk of the archival materials are dated between 1986 and 1991.

The Laine Nooney Sierra On-Line collection is arranged into three series, two of which have been further divided into subseries, with one of those subseries even further divided into sub-subseries. Physical items in this collection are housed in two archival document boxes and one oversized folder. Digital items are located on the internal network of The Strong.

Related Materials

The Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play also houses the Ken and Roberta Williams' Sierra On-Line collection, a compilation of corporate records, publicity, financial reports, game catalogs, newsletters, magazines, published books and other materials from Sierra On-Line. Additionally, the materials on loan to The Strong supplement that collection with original script ideas, notes, planning information, sketches, and other game design-related papers.

System of Arrangement

- Series I: Jim Walls items, 1987-1993
- Series II: Dale Carlson items, c.1980s-1992
 - Subseries A: Company documents, 1983-1991
 - Sub-subseries 1: Production Q&A
 - Sub-subseries 2: Financial papers
 - Sub-subseries 3: Company manuals/plans
 - Sub-subseries 4: Company correspondence
 - Sub-subseries 5: Miscellaneous
 - Subseries B: In-game maps, c.1980s
 - Subseries C: Game pitches/synopses, 1988-1991
 - Subseries D: Game code printouts, 1984-1989
 - Subseries E: Art/promotional material, 1989-1991
 - Subseries F: Photographs/slides, 1987-1990
 - Subseries G: Products/inserts, 1986-1992
- Series III: Oral history transcriptions, 2015

Contents List

Series I: Jim Walls items, 1987-1993

Scope and Content Note: This series contains a variety of materials belonging to former Sierra On-Line employee Jim Walls, including correspondence, game outlines, company papers, drawings, and a piece of the Berlin Wall.

Box 1

Folder 1 Jim Walls items, 1987-1993

Series II: Dale Carlson items, c.1980s-1992

Scope and Content Note: This series contains the items acquired from Dale Carlson, former employee at Sierra On-Line. The items include company documents, maps, drawings, game pitches and synopses, game codes, art, promotional material, photographs, slides, and inserts.

Subseries A: Company documents, 1983-1991

Scope and Content Note: This subseries contains company documents relating to production Q&A, financial papers, company manuals, financial and insurance plans, correspondence, and miscellaneous documents. They are split into 5 sub-subseries.

Sub-subseries 1: Production Q&A

Scope and Content Note: This sub-subseries holds items that pertain to the production of Sierra On-Line games, such as memos, correspondence, assignment details, beta testing forms, and drafts for game inserts.

Box 1

Folder 2 Production Q&A, 1987-1991

Sub-subseries 2: Financial papers

Scope and Content Note: This sub-subseries includes items that pertain to the financial aspect of Sierra On-Line, as well as financial plans and budgets.

Box 1

Folder 3 Financial Papers, 1990-1991

Sub-subseries 3: Company manuals/plans

Scope and Content Note: This sub-subseries contains employee manuals, employee benefit packets, stock options, insurance handbooks, and plans for demos.

Box 1

Folder 4 Company manuals/plans, 1987-1991

Sub-subseries 4: Company correspondence

Scope and Content Note: This sub-subseries holds items such as business correspondence, inter-office inquiries, inter-office memos, and urgent notes.

Box 1

Folder 5 Company correspondence, 1983-1990

Sub-subseries 5: Miscellaneous

Scope and Content Note: This sub-subseries includes items of miscellaneous nature, such as written notes, work distribution lists, informational packets, time logs, programming schedules, notepads, cover sheets, maps, and diagrams.

Box 1

Folder 6 Miscellaneous, 1988-1989

Subseries B: In-game maps, c. 1980s

Scope and Content Note: This subseries contains in-game maps, drawings, and descriptions. One item has been moved to an oversize folder.

Box 1

Folder 7 In-game maps, c.1980s

Oversized

Folder 1 Oversized items, c.1980s

Subseries C: Game pitches/synopses, 1988-1991

Scope and Content Note: This subseries holds game pitch ideas, game synopses, and descriptions of games.

Box 1

Folder 8 Game pitches/synopses, 1988-1991

Subseries D: Game code printouts, 1984-1989

Scope and Content Note: This subseries is comprised of game code printouts, instructional printouts, help file printouts, and debug printouts.

Box 2

Folder 1 Game code printouts, 1984-1989

Subseries E: Art/promotional material, 1989-1991

Scope and Content Note: This subseries is made up of various game art, cover art, and company promotional material.

Box 2

Folder 2 Art/promotional material, 1989-1991

Oversized

Folder 1 Oversized items, c.1980s

Subseries F: Photographs/slides, 1987-1990

Scope and Content Note: This subseries contains various slides, a photograph, and notes describing the slides.

Box 2

Folder 3 Photographs/slides, 1987-1990

Subseries G: Products/inserts, 1986-1992

Scope and Content Note: This subseries holds floppy disks, envelopes, game inserts, game manuals, and instructions.

Box 2

Folder 4 Products/inserts, 1986-1992

Series III: Oral history transcriptions, 2015 [RESTRICTED]

Scope and Content Note: The oral history transcriptions in this collection have been restricted until June 2021. [The Strong received three transcriptions in 2015 which have since been restricted; additional oral history transcriptions are expected to be added to this collection.]