Finding Aid to the
Living Books Collection, 1987-2004

Summary Information
Title: Living Books collection
Creator: Jeff Schon and Living Books (primary)
ID: 116.246
Date: 1987-2004 (inclusive); 1993-1997 (bulk)
Extent: 7 linear feet
Language: The materials in this collection are in English.
Abstract: The Living Books collection is a compilation of corporate records, financial documents, product development documentation, marketing materials, publicity clippings, reference materials, and more. The bulk of the materials are dated between 1993 and 1997.
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 Living Books collection was donated to The Strong in January 2016 as a gift from Jeff Schon. The papers were accessioned by The Strong under Object ID 116.246 and were received from Jeff Schon in 6 boxes.
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Controlled Access Terms
Personal Names
- Lee-Merrow, Susan W.
- Schon, Jeff

Corporate Names
- Brøderbund
- Brøderbund Software, Inc.
- Living Books (Firm)
- Random House (Firm)
Subjects

- Brøderbund
- Computer games
- Computer games industry
- Dr. Seuss’s ABC (Computer game)
- Educational games--Software
- Game design and development
- Games--software
- Green Eggs and Ham (Computer game)
- Living Books (Firm)
- Reading games
- Seuss, Dr.

Historical Note


In January 1997, Random House sold its 50% interest in Living Books back to Brøderbund. The Learning Company then purchased Brøderbund in 1998 and immediately terminated more than 500 former Brøderbund employees. Mattel acquired The Learning Company a year later, and subsequent transactions effectively rendered the original Brøderbund defunct. Living Books ceased operations as a result of the 1998 takeover, but publisher Houghton Mifflin Harcourt purchased the rights to the Living Books titles and content.

In 2010, Wanderful, Inc. established Wanderful Interactive Storybooks based on the original Living Books products, with the approval of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. As of 2016, these interactive story apps are available on Apple, Android, and Amazon.
Collection Scope and Content Note
The Living Books collection documents the creation of Living Books as a separate company owned by both Brøderbund Software, Inc. and Random House, Inc. and its operations through 1997. Material types in this collection include corporate records, financial documents, product development documentation, marketing materials, publicity clippings, reference materials, and more. When possible, original folder titles as labeled by Jeff Schon were retained. Additional scope and content information can be found in the “Contents List” section of this finding aid.

The Living Books collection is arranged into nine series, two of which have been further divided into subseries. The collection is housed in 14 archival document boxes.

System of Arrangement
Series I: Corporate information, 1991-1996
  Subseries A: Mission
  Subseries B: Annual reports
  Subseries C: Company meetings
  Subseries D: Board of Trustees meetings
  Subseries E: Agreements
  Subseries A: Market research and reference
  Subseries B: Marketing plans and projects
  Subseries C: Sales accounts and distributors
  Subseries D: Sales conferences
Series VI: Correspondence, 1994-1997
Series VIII: Reference, 1987-2004
Series IX: Miscellaneous, n.d.
Contents List

Series I: Corporate information, 1991-1996

Subseries A: Mission

Scope and Content Note: This subseries contains information about the origin of Living Books through meeting minutes, planning materials, and more. Notes and reference from the Living Books “mission meeting” is also housed in this subseries.

Box 1
Folder 2  Living Books mission meeting - notes and reference, August 16, 1994

Subseries B: Annual reports

Scope and Content Note: This subseries holds annual reports from Brøderbund, a parent company of Living Books.

For more information on Brøderbund, see also the Brøderbund Software, Inc. collection in the Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play.

Box 1
Folder 4  Brøderbund 1993 Annual Report, 1993
Folder 5  Brøderbund 1996 Annual Report, 1996

Subseries C: Company meetings

Scope and Content Note: This subseries houses meeting agendas and notes from company-wide meetings at Living Books, as well as production meeting notes.

Box 1
Folder 6  Company meeting agendas and notes, 1994
Folder 7  Company meeting agendas and notes, 1995
Folder 8  Company meeting agendas and notes, 1996
Folder 9  Production meeting notes, 1995
Folder 10  Production meeting notes, 1996

Subseries D: Board of Trustees meetings

Scope and Content Note: This subseries contains Board of Trustees meeting agendas, notes, minutes, budgets, forecasts, and other plans presented to the Living Books Board of Trustees.

Box 2
Folder 1  May 1994 Board of Directors’ Meeting - notes, correspondence, and agenda, 1994
Folder 2  1995 Board of Directors’ Meetings - notes, minutes, and correspondence, 1995
Folder 5  Board of Directors Meeting Report, June 8, 1995, with Living Books Revised Budget and Forecast, June 1995
Folder 8  Board of Directors Meeting Report, May 15, 1996
Folder 10 Board of Directors Meeting Report and agenda, September 19, 1996

Subseries E: Agreements
Scope and Content Note: Within this subseries are agreements, contracts, and other reference pertaining to Living Books and Brøderbund.

Box 2
Folder 11 Brøderbund and Learning Company merger - internal documentation, July 30, 1995
Folder 12 Production and distribution agreement [Brøderbund and American Interactive Media, Inc.], 1991-1993
Folder 14 Columbia House proposal - reference and correspondence, 1994
Folder 15 Affiliate distribution agreements, 1995-1996

Scope and Content Note: Within this series are budgets, financial statements, spreadsheets, memos, and policies relating to finances at Living Books.

Box 3
Folder 1  1994 Budget - spreadsheets, notes, and memos, 1994
Folder 2  1995 Budget (Part 1 of 2) - budget and notes, 1995
Folder 3  1995 Budget (Part 2 of 2) - budget and notes, 1995
Folder 5  1996-1997 Financials (Part 2 of 2) - spreadsheets, notes, and memos, 1996-1997

Box 4
Folder 1  Financial statements - spreadsheets and memos, 1994
Folder 2  Revised budget - memos and notes, 1994
Folder 3  1994 Year-End Audit - spreadsheets and memo, 1995
Folder 4  Expense approval levels memo, 1994
Folder 5  Chart of accounts memo and draft chart, 1994
Folder 6  Corporate cash management - policies and memos, 1995 and n.d.
Folder 7  1996 Annual Operating Plan - presentation, February 16, 1995
Folder 8  1995 P&Ls - revised budget and forecast with notes, June 1995
Folder 9  1995 Revised Budget and Forecast - spreadsheets and notes, June 1995
Folder 10  1995 Financial Worksheets - spreadsheets, notes, and memos, 1995
Folder 11  1996 Domestic Unit and Revenue Projections - spreadsheets and notes, November 1995
Folder 12  1996 AOP - spreadsheets, notes, and memo, 1995-1996
Folder 13 1996 Production Costs - spreadsheet, 1996
Folder 14 1996 R&D Budget - spreadsheet and notes, 1995
Folder 15 1996 Budget Re-Forecast - budget and memo, 1996
Folder 16 April 1996 Financials - spreadsheets and memo, 1996
Folder 17 June 1996 Financials - spreadsheets and memo, 1996
Folder 18 August 1996 Financials - spreadsheets and memos, 1996
Folder 19 September 1996 Financials - spreadsheets and memo, 1996
Folder 20 October 1996 Financials - spreadsheets and memo, 1996
Folder 21 November 1996 Financials - spreadsheets and memo, 1996

Box 5
Folder 1 1996 Year-End Financials - data and spreadsheets, 1996
Folder 2 Project P/L Statements - spreadsheets and notes, 1994-1996
Folder 3 Financial Procedures - memo, December 8, 1996
Folder 4 Final 1997 Budget - spreadsheets, 1996
Folder 5 Structural P&Ls - spreadsheets, 1997-1998
Folder 6 P&L reports, 1996
Folder 7 Production expenses - charts and spreadsheets, 1994-1996
Folder 8 Cost of goods (COGs) analysis, 1996
Folder 9 Cost reports budget tracking, 1995-1996
Folder 10 Financial summary spreadsheets, 1994-1996
Folder 11 Financial statements drafts, 1994-1995
Folder 12 Financial reference spreadsheets, 1995

Subseries A: Market research and reference
Scope and Content Note: This subseries holds marketing presentations, focus
group data, consultant analysis, and other market research on Living Books
products and the educational software industry.

Box 5
Folder 14 Living Books Customer Analysis, August 1994
Folder 15 CD-ROM studies - “How Computers Live in Schools” and “CD-ROM Talking
Books: A Case Study of Promise and Practice” reports, 1995
Folder 16 “Living Books Corporate Branding Project - Management Interview Summary
and Strategic Focus Map,” PSL Marketing Resources, January 1996

Box 6
Folder 1 “Living Books Corporate Branding Project - Branding Case Studies and
Competitive Positioning Analysis,” PSL Marketing Resources, January 1996
Folder 2 “Living Books Corporate Branding Project - Trade Interview Summary,” PSL
Marketing Resources, January 1996
Folder 3 “Living Books Summary of Learning,” PSL Marketing Resources, January 1996
Folder 4 “Living Books: International Market Opportunity Assessment,” Class project for
Global Marketing Strategy course, April 25, 1996
Folder 5  Focus group data - Living Books and PSL Marketing Resources, June 1996
Folder 9  Outside consultant research on Living Books, 1996
Folder 10  PC Data - reference and statistics, 1995-1997
Folder 11  Software direct marketing - reference, 1995

Subseries B: Marketing plans and projects
Scope and Content Note: This subseries houses marketing plans, public relations guidelines, press releases, press kits, and presentations from the Marketing Team at Living Books.

Box 7
Folder 1  PR Guidelines - policies, FAQs, correspondence, and notes; 1993-1995
Folder 2  Marketing plans - presentations, notes, and memos, 1994-1997
Folder 3  Media plan - memo and revised plans, 1994
Folder 4  Plan-o-grams - descriptions and notes, 1994
Folder 5  PR project status updates, 1994-1995
Folder 6  General marketing expenses budget - memos and spreadsheets, 1995
Folder 7  Press releases, 1995
Folder 8  Marketing promotions notes, 1996
Folder 9  Brøderbund’s Living Books press kit with notes, 1993
Folder 11  “Living Bookmobile” - notes, memos, and sketches, 1994
Folder 12  *Dr. Seuss’s ABC* marketing plan, 1995
Folder 13  *Dr. Seuss’s ABC* publicity planning and reference, 1995
Folder 14  “Dr. Seuss presentation” to Brøderbund board, 1995
Folder 15  CKS - correspondence, notes, and presentation on Advertising Strategy, 1994-1995
Folder 16  CKS - Advertising and Media Strategy for *Dr. Seuss’s ABC*, 1995
Folder 17  *Dr. Seuss’s ABC* publicity - press kit, notes, and publicity plan, 1995
Folder 18  *Green Eggs and Ham* marketing plan - plan, presentation, test, and notes; 1996
Folder 19  Living Books press kit, 1996
Folder 20  *Stellaluna* press kit, 1996
Folder 21  Internet information and strategies, 1996
Folder 22  Brøderbund Kids Studio press kit, 1998
Folder 23  Brøderbund marketing presentation, n.d.
Folder 24  Brøderbund Software trademark policy with notes, n.d.
Subseries C: Sales accounts and distributors

Scope and Content Note: This subseries contains information on domestic and international sales, statistics, agreements, notes, and other documentation from the Sales Team at Living Books.

Box 8
Folder 1  Brøderbund Sales Meeting Living Books Products - presentation, August 1994
Folder 2  International distribution notes, 1994-1996
Folder 3  International strategy notes and reference, 1994
Folder 4  International distribution, Australia - notes, correspondence, and draft agreements, 1995
Folder 5  International sales, Brazil - notes, 1995
Folder 6  International distribution, Italy - notes and agreement [Instituto Geografico DeAgostini], 1995
Folder 7  International distribution, Japan - memos, notes, and draft agreements, 1994-1995
Folder 8  International agreement draft, Spain, 1994
Folder 9  International distribution, Spain - correspondence [Editorial Planeta DeAgostini], 1995
Folder 10  Marketing/sales report memos and spreadsheets, 1995-1996
Folder 11  Education marketing sales report statistics and reference, 1995-1996
Folder 12  Sales account-by-account information, 1996
Folder 13  Sales and returns spreadsheets, 1996
Folder 14  Living Books historic sales spreadsheets, 1994-1996
Folder 15  Sales report summaries spreadsheets, 1995 and n.d.
Folder 16  Sales planning presentation and notes, n.d. [c. 1996]
Folder 17  Living Books presentation notes and reference, 1996-1997

Subseries D: Sales conferences

Scope and Content Note: This subseries holds Living Books’ staff notes, schedules, and reference from computer software sales conferences between 1994 and 1996.

Box 8
Folder 18  Comdex appointments, Spring 1994
Folder 19  Bologna Book Fair report, n.d.
Folder 20  Milia Exhibition notes and reference, 1995
Folder 21  Random House Juvenile and Merchandise Group, Fall Sales Conference, April 1995 information, 1995
Folder 22  E3 L.A. notes and reference, 1996

Scope and Content Note: This series houses schedules, memos, notes, scripts, layout, outlines, plans, budgets, and other information relating to the development of Living Books products. Also within this series are company documentation on product development strategies and production steps.

Some of Living Books’ products were developed using code names; these are noted in brackets following each folder title, where appropriate.

Box 9
Folder 1  Arthur’s Birthday schedules, 1993-1994
Folder 2  Arthur’s Reading Race memos, agreements, and budgets, 1996 [“ARR”]
Folder 3  Between the Lions product proposal, 1996
Folder 4  The Cat in the Hat proposal and designs, 1996-1997 [“Mars”]
Folder 5  The Cat in the Hat updates, memos, and reports, 1996 [“Mars”]
Folder 6  Dr. Seuss’s ABC notes, memos, and scripts, 1995 [“Snickers”]
Folder 7  Dr. Seuss’s ABC production binder - script, layouts, and model sheets, 1994 [“Snickers”]
Folder 8  Eager Ogre’s Pet Show proposal and project information, 1995-1997 [“Kit-Kat”]
Folder 9  Green Eggs and Ham notes, outlines, plans, and budget; 1995-1996 [“Truffles”]
Folder 10  Green Eggs and Ham media plan meeting, 1996 [“Truffles”]
Folder 11  Green Eggs and Ham production binder - design document, 1996 [“Truffles”]
Folder 12  Little Monster at School framework, source book, and activities, 1994
Folder 13  “Musical Adventures Qualitative Research” final report, November 26, 1996

Box 10
Folder 1  “Netpal project” - memo and strategy, 1996
Folder 2  Netscape/Living Books collaboration - project update and correspondence, 1996
Folder 3  Nickelodeon Rugrats - report, notes, agendas, budgets, design documents, and draft license; 1996-1997
Folder 4  Sesame Street product proposal, 1995
Folder 5  Seuss book list - reference, 1994
Folder 6  Sheila Rae the Brave planning materials, notes, and schedules, 1994-1995
Folder 7  Sing Along: Maggie’s Farm product overview, 1996
Folder 8  Stellaluna budget, 1996
Folder 9  Story Book Maker notes, research, and design specifications, 1996
Folder 11  Living Books software engine development, 1994-1995
Folder 12  Production steps, 1994-1995
Folder 13  Product development strategy, 1996
Folder 14  Product development process, 1996
Folder 15  Production form template, 1996
Folder 16  Publishing procedures - “Product Development Planning and Control Process,” Knowledge Adventure, 1995
Folder 18  Product development schedules and budgets, 1996
Folder 19  Research and design - 1996 Goals and Objectives, 1995
Folder 20 Submissions titles - Current submissions - status report, 1995
Folder 21 Submissions titles - Possible titles - reference and notes, 1996
Folder 22 Submissions titles - Titles under consideration - notes, 1995-1996


Scope and Content Note: This series contains information about the staffing and organization of Living Books personnel. These materials include position descriptions, performance appraisal guidelines, compensation philosophy, team meeting notes, and more.

Box 11
Folder 1 Living Books positions - job descriptions and evaluation guidelines, 1997
Folder 2 Living Books positions - job descriptions, n.d.
Folder 3 Job title classifications, 1994, 1996
Folder 4 Staffing level reports, 1994
Folder 5 Independent contractor guidelines, 1996
Folder 6 Performance appraisal guidelines draft, 1996
Folder 7 Performance evaluation process and notes, 1996
Folder 8 Compensation philosophy research reports and notes, 1995
Folder 9 Long-term incentive plan - research, notes, and reports, 1996
Folder 10 Office plans, 1995
Folder 11 Office procedures and information, 1996
Folder 12 Organizational design - reference, 1995
Folder 13 Meeting agendas and notes between Susan Lee-Merrow and Jeff Schon, 1995
Folder 14 Jeff Schon schedules, 1994, 1996
Folder 15 Manager meetings - performance reviews memo, 1996
Folder 16 Efficiency Team - notes, 1996
Folder 17 Innovation Team - meeting notes and emailed reference, 1996-1997
Folder 18 Revised Brøderbund company purpose and mission statement, 1997

Series VI: Correspondence, 1994-1997

Scope and Content Note: Within this series are original correspondence folders between Living Books and other companies.

Box 11
Folder 19 Correspondence - Anaya Interactiva, 1996
Folder 20 Correspondence - Grolier, 1996-1997
Folder 21 Correspondence - Tyndale House, 1994-1995
Folder 22 Correspondence - Miscellaneous, 1996

Scope and Content Note: This series contains clippings assembled and amassed by staff of Living Books. The materials cover product launches, reviews, and advertisements of Living Books titles, as well as articles about the computer software industry, early childhood education topics, and home computer usage.

Box 12
Folder 1 Loose press clippings, 1992-1993
Folder 2 Loose press clippings, January-December 1994
Folder 3 Loose press clippings, January-December 1995
Folder 4 Loose press clippings, January-December 1996
Folder 5 Loose press clippings, January-August 1997
Folder 6 Loose press clippings, n.d.

Box 13
Folder 1 Press clippings, October 1994-November 1995 [previously in binder]
Folder 2 Press clippings, January 1996-November 1996 [previously in binder]
Folder 3 Press clippings, December 1996-January 1997 [previously in binder]

Series VIII: Reference, 1987-2004

Scope and Content Note: This series holds reference materials about competitors in the educational software industry, compensation survey details, trends and statistics in the computer industry, and more.

Box 13
Folder 4 Softletter Executive Compensation Survey, July 11, 1994
Folder 6 PC Data Reports - trends and statistics (Part 1 of 2), 1997-2000
Folder 7 PC Data Reports - trends and statistics (Part 2 of 2), 1997-2000

Box 14
Folder 1 News articles - reference on Dr. Seuss, 1987-1991
Folder 5 Tom Snyder Productions - A Scholastic Company, press kits and reference, 2003-2004

Series IX: Miscellaneous, n.d.

Scope and Content Note: This series houses an undated troubleshooting guide and some parody sketches about a Living Books product character.

Box 14
Folder 6 Little Ark Interactive Troubleshooting Guide draft, n.d.
Folder 7 Stellaluna parody [bat-related] sketches, n.d.