

Finding Aid to the Sumerian Game Collection, 1962-1967, 2015

Summary Information

Title: Sumerian Game collection

Creator: Unknown (primary); The Strong (secondary)

ID: 116.sumer

Date: 1962-1967, 2015

Extent: 0.25 linear feet (physical); 2.5 GB (digital)

Language: The materials in this collection are in English.

Abstract: The *Sumerian Game* collection contains three teletype printouts from the *Sumerian Game* (also called *Sumer*), one of the first educational computer games, along with photographic slides and a research report filed to the Office of Education at the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. The dated materials are from 1962-1967, though some items are undated. Scans of the slides were created and inventoried in 2015 and are included in this collection.

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: Much of the *Sumerian Game* collection was donated to The Strong in January 2015 as a gift from Devin Monnens and Alexandra Johnson. The printouts and slides were accessioned by The Strong under Object ID 115.146 and were received from Devin Monnens in two envelopes. Library staff added the ERIC report to the collection in 2016.

Preferred citation for publication: *Sumerian Game* collection, Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play at The Strong

Processed by: Julia Novakovic, January 2016. (Devin Monnens also scanned and provided an inventory for the slides in this collection in January 2015.)

Controlled Access Terms

Subjects

- Computer games
- Educational games
- Simulation games
- Simulation games in education
- Sumerian Game (Computer game)

- Teletype in education

Historical Note

The Sumerian Game was developed by the Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) in Northern Westchester County, New York, in the early 1960s. The game, designed to teach sixth graders basic principles of economics, had participants play as members of Ancient Mesopotamian society. Prior to game play, students listened to an introductory programmed lecture synced to a slide projector. During the introduction, students learned about the land of Sumer around 3500 BC. Then, brief instructions were typed out for the student at a typewriter terminal controlled by a computer. What followed were various agricultural dilemmas requiring action by the player (assuming the role of Luduga I, a priest-ruler of Lagash) and progress reports on harvest and population. Random disasters, such as floods, fires, and grain rot, could occur throughout the game. Further phases of the game added in the development of crafts, trade, and other economic factors.

Collection Scope and Content Note

The *Sumerian Game* collection contains three “scrolls” of teletype printouts of sample gameplay, 39 Kodachrome slides utilized in introducing the game to students, and a research report filed to the Office of Education at the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. (Digital scans of the slides are also part of this collection.) The materials are mainly dated between 1962 and 1965.

The *Sumerian Game* collection is arranged into three series, one of which has been further divided into subseries. The physical materials are housed in one archival document box; digital files are located on the internal network of The Strong.

System of Arrangement

Series I: Teletype printouts, 1964 and n.d.

Series II: Slides, 1962-1965, 2015

Subseries A: Kodachrome slides

Subseries B: Digital scans

Series III: Reference, 1967

Contents List

Series I: Teletype printouts, 1964 and n.d.

Scope and Content Note: This series contains three teletype printouts from various game simulations, each titled “Sumerian Economic Model.” Only one of the teletypes is dated, though it is likely the others are also from 1964.

Box 1

- Object 1 “Sumerian Economic Model” game teletype printout, n.d. [approx. 5’ long]
- Object 2 “Sumerian Economic Model” game teletype printout, n.d. [approx. 5’ long]
- Object 3 “Sumerian Economic Model” game teletype printout, September 18, 1964 [approx. 6’ long]

Series II: Slides, 1962-1965, 2015

Subseries A: Kodachrome slides

Scope and Content Note: This series holds 39 Kodachrome color slides dated between 1962 and 1965. The slides depict illustrations of life in early Mesopotamia, along with some artwork and statuary of historical figures. Many of the slides are captioned in pencil. (These slides would have been shown to students while the introductory lecture to the game played.)

Box 1

- Folder 1 Sumer slides, 1962-1965
 - 1. [no caption], April 1964
 - 2. “Scribe, Writing,” August 1962
 - 3. “Simple Plow,” July 1964
 - 4. “Simple Houses I,” August 1964
 - 5. “Death of a Ruler II,” August 1964
 - 6. “Chariot III,” August 1964
 - 7. “Chariot III,” August 1964
 - 8. “Mold,” June 1965
 - 9. “Irrigation (II),” August 1964
 - 10. “Gilgamesh,” April 1964
 - 11. “Caravan III,” August 1964
 - 12. “Potter Wheel,” August 1964
 - 13. “Map,” January 1964
 - 14. “Loom III,” August 1964
 - 15. “Ox-drawn Plow,” July 1964
 - 16. “Plow + Oxen I,” August 1964
 - 17. “Kiln - Bilos,” July 1964
 - 18. “Traders III,” August 1964
 - 19. “Sumerian,” August 1964
 - 20. “Cutting Grain II,” August 1964
 - 21. “Sumerian,” July 1964
 - 22. [no caption], June 1965
 - 23. “Sumer - Fire in fields,” September 1963
 - 24. “Round Boats,” August 1964

25. "Ziggurat at Night I," August 1964
26. "Luduga," August 1964
27. "Workshops, Zig + Workshops," June 1965
28. "Flood," August 1963
29. "Cylinder Seals," n.d.
30. "Advanced Potters Wheel III," August 1964
31. "Map," August 1962
32. [no caption], June 1965
33. "Scribe," August 1962
34. "Map," n.d.
35. "Sumerian man," n.d.
36. "Pop. Increase," September 1963
37. "Map," September 1963
38. "Masons, Bricks," n.d.
39. "Starving," September 1963

Subseries B: Digital scans

Scope and Content Note: Scans of the original slides were created and inventoried in 2015. These TIFF files are accessible via the internal network at The Strong.

- Sumer slide 01_0206215 [-no caption-]
- Sumer slide 02_0206215 [Scribe Writing]
- Sumer slide 03_0206215 [Simple Plow]
- Sumer slide 04_0206215 [Simple Houses I]
- Sumer slide 05_0206215 [Death of a Ruler II]
- Sumer slide 06_0206215 [Chariot III]
- Sumer slide 07_0206215 [Chariot III]
- Sumer slide 08_0206215 [Mold]
- Sumer slide 09_0206215 [Irrigation (II)]
- Sumer slide 10_0206215 [Gilgamesh]
- Sumer slide 11_0206215 [Caravan III]
- Sumer slide 12_0206215 [Potter Wheel]
- Sumer slide 13_0206215 [Map]
- Sumer slide 14_0206215 [Loom III]
- Sumer slide 15_0206215 [Ox-drawn Plow]
- Sumer slide 16_0206215 [Plow + Oxen I]
- Sumer slide 17_0206215 [Kiln - Bilos]
- Sumer slide 18_0206215 [Traders III]
- Sumer slide 19_0206215 [Sumerian]
- Sumer slide 20_0206215 [Cutting Grain II]
- Sumer slide 21_0206215 [Sumerian]
- Sumer slide 22_0206215 [-no caption-]
- Sumer slide 23_0206215 [Sumer - Fire in fields]
- Sumer slide 24_0206215 [Round Boats]

- Sumer slide 25_0206215 [Ziggurat at Night I]
- Sumer slide 26_0206215 [Luduga]
- Sumer slide 27_0206215 [Zig + workshops]
- Sumer slide 28_0206215 [Flood]
- Sumer slide 29_0206215 [Cylinder seals]
- Sumer slide 30_0206215 [Advanced Potters Wheel]
- Sumer slide 31_0206215 [Map]
- Sumer slide 32_0206215 [-no caption-]
- Sumer slide 33_0206215 [Scribe]
- Sumer slide 34_0206215 [Map]
- Sumer slide 35_0206215 [Sumerian Man]
- Sumer slide 36_0206215 [Pop. Increase]
- Sumer slide 37_0206215 [Map]
- Sumer slide 38_0206215 [Masons, Bricks]
- Sumer slide 39_0206215 [Starving]

Series III: Reference, 1967

Scope and Content Note: This series houses a copy of an educational research report on computer-based economics games filed to the Office of Education at the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in June 1967. *The Sumerian Game* features prominently in this report, which includes descriptive information on gameplay.

Box 1

Folder 2

“The Production and Evaluation of Three Computer-Based Economics Games for the Sixth Grade,” Richard L. Wing with Mabel Addis, Walter Goodman, Jimmer Leonard, and William McKay, June 1967