

Finding Aid to the William J. Hoyt Dungeons & Dragons Collection, 1965-2017

Summary Information

Title: William J. Hoyt Dungeons & Dragons collection

Creator: William J. Hoyt (primary)

ID: 117.9587

Date: 1965-2017 (inclusive); 1966-1979 (bulk)

Extent: 251 MB

Language: This collection is in English.

Abstract: The William J. Hoyt Dungeons & Dragons collection is a compilation of scans, photographs, and digital files documenting Hoyt's personal involvement with Dungeons & Dragons and other role-playing games. The bulk of the materials are dated between 1966 and 1979.

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 William J. Hoyt Dungeons & Dragons collection was donated to The Strong in October 2017 as a gift of William J. Hoyt. The papers were accessioned by The Strong under Object ID 117.9587 were received from Hoyt on a USB drive.

Preferred citation for publication: William J. Hoyt Dungeons & Dragons collection, Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play at The Strong

Processed by: Julia Novakovic, May 2019

Revision Note: Some file descriptions revised to reflect edits suggested by researcher Michael Calleia, October 2019.

Controlled Access Terms

Personal Names

- Arneson, Dave
- Barker, M.A.R.
- Barker, Phillip
- Grant, Charles
- Gygax, E. Gary
- Hoyt, William J. ("Bill")
- Peterson, Jon

- Wesely, David

Corporate Names

- TSR Hobbies, Inc.
- TSR, Inc.
- WAW Productions

Subjects

- Arneson, Dave
- Dungeons and Dragons (Game)
- Dungeons and Dragons (Game) -- History
- Empire of the Petal Throne (Game)
- Fantasy gamers
- Fantasy games
- Games of strategy -- History
- Gygax, Gary
- Role playing
- Role playing games
- Role playing games -- History
- Simulation games
- Simulation games in education
- War games

Biographical Note

William J. ("Bill") Hoyt was an active gamer during the early years of TSR's Dungeons & Dragons in the 1970s. Hoyt became interested in gaming the previous decade after visiting relatives in England; while there, he met Scottish wargamer Charles Grant who introduced him to tabletop wargaming. After returning home to Minnesota, Hoyt got in contact with miniature wargamer Dave Wesely, who invited him to join the Midwest Military Simulation Association (MMSA): a group of collectors, gamers, and military historians. Hoyt became friends with Dave Arneson (and later, Gary Gygax). Hoyt and Arneson joined the Castle and Crusade Society, building armies of figurines, learning about the middle ages, and creating rules for wargames. The original edition of Dungeons & Dragons was developed from a campaign played by this group of gamers, and the first edition of D&D was published by Gygax's TSR Hobbies, Inc. in 1974.

Hoyt, also a school librarian, created a class project for sixth graders involving D&D gameplay to teach mythology, map creation, and critical thinking. Hoyt founded World at War Productions in 1974, inspired by TSR's success with selling game rules. WAW secured the rights to publish M.A.R. Barker's Empire of the Petal Throne game, which TSR published in 1975. Hoyt continued to play war games and attend Gen Con events for the next several decades. His involvement with the origins of Dungeons & Dragons is documented in Jon Peterson's *Playing at the World: A History of Simulating Wars, People and Fantastic Adventures from Chess to Role-Playing Games* and other documentary projects.

Collection Scope and Content Note

The William J. Hoyt Dungeons & Dragons collection contains digital files relating to Hoyt's personal history with roleplaying games, especially Dungeons & Dragons and Empire of the Petal Throne. Materials include scans of letters (including correspondence with Gary Gygax), digital photos of student narratives created by playing Dungeons & Dragons, scans of newsletters, and other photographs and reference materials. Additional scope and content information can be found in the Contents List section of this finding aid.

The William J. Hoyt Dungeons & Dragons collection has been arranged into four series. This digital collection can be accessed on-site at The Strong.

Related Materials

The Strong houses a first edition Dungeons & Dragons game previously owned by Hoyt (Object ID 116.7674) which contains a booklet of stories and drawings created by his class of sixth-grade students in 1974. The project's objectives and method are noted in the booklet, including "1. To teach mythology and legends of the medieval period; 2. To teach map reading and map making skills; 3. To give practical application for mathematics skills in recording."

Also donated by Hoyt to The Strong are a Dungeons & Dragons booklet accessory and dice (Object ID 117.5698), a physical copy of the *Corner of the Table* newsletter (Vol. 4, c. 1972), and a publication from the University of Minnesota about toys and wargaming figures.

The Strong holds hundreds of artifacts related to role-playing games, including modules, rule books, miniatures, and video games. The Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play maintains a list of Dungeons & Dragons-related library and archival materials, such as manuscripts, newsletters, magazines, trade catalogs, strategy guides, fiction books, and reference works.

System of Arrangement

Series I: Correspondence, 1968-2014 and n.d.

Series II: Student narratives, n.d. [c. 1970s]

Series III: Gaming history, 1968-2017

Series IV: Reference, 1965-2014

Contents List

Series I: Correspondence, 1968-2014 and n.d.

Scope and Content Note: This series contains scans of correspondence retained by Hoyt. Title names for files indicate if this was received by Hoyt (“recd”) or written/sent by Hoyt (“sent”). Files are numbered so they appear in chronological order (with undated files instead alphabetized at the end). Letters received by Hoyt include materials from Charles Grant, Phil Barker (later, M.A.R. Barker), Gary Gygax, Dave Arneson, and Dave Wesely.

Digital - I

Folder 1

Folder 01_Correspondence [43 files]

- “01. 1968_10_16_Minature Figurines_01_recd” - .JPG [letter from N.E. Dickinson at Miniature Figurines to Hoyt, October 16, 1968], 1968
- “02. 1968_10_17_Charles Grant_01_recd” - .JPG [letter from Charles Grant to Hoyt, October 17, 1968], 1968
- “03. 1969_01_11_Charles Grant_01_recd” - .JPG [letter from Charles Grant to Hoyt, January 11, 1969], 1969
- “04. 1969_04_12_Charles Grant_01_recd” - .JPG [letter from Charles Grant to Hoyt, April 12, 1969], 1969
- “05. 1969_05_17_Charles Grant_01_recd” - .JPG [letter from Charles Grant to Hoyt, May 17, 1969], 1969
- “06. 1969_06_24_Charles Grant_01_recd” - .JPG [letter from Charles Grant to Hoyt, June 24, 1969], 1969
- “07. 1969_07_29_George Lord to Dave Arneson_01” - .JPG [letter from George Lord to Dave Wesely, July 29, 1969], 1969
- “08. 1969_07_31_Charles Grant_01_recd” - .JPG [letter from Charles Grant to Hoyt, July 31, 1969], 1969
- “09. 1972_09_06_Rodney (unidentified)_01_recd” - .JPG [letter from Rodney (no last name signed) to Hoyt, September 6, 1972, page 1 of 2], 1972
- “10. 1972_09_06_Rodney (unidentified)_02_recd” - .JPG [letter from Rodney (no last name signed) to Hoyt, September 6, 1972, page 2 of 2], 1972
- “11. 1974_09_17_Phil Barker-WRG_01_recd” - .JPG [letter from Phil Barker, Wargames Research Group, to Hoyt, September 17, 1974], 1974
- “12. 1975_05_07_Gary Gygax_01_recd” - .JPG [letter from Gary Gygax to Hoyt, May 7, 1975], 1975
- “13. 1975_12_05_Gary Gygax_01_recd” - .JPG [letter from Gary Gygax, TSR Hobbies, Inc., to Hoyt, December 5, 1975], 1975
- “14. 1976_04_02_TSR_01_recd” - .JPG [letter from Gary Gygax, TSR Hobbies, Inc., to “People,” April 2, 1976], 1976
- “15. 1976_06_09_TSR_01_recd” - .JPG [letter from Gary Gygax, TSR Hobbies, Inc., to Hoyt, June 9, 1976], 1976
- “16. 1976_07_02_TSR_01_recd” - .JPG [letter from Gary Gygax, TSR Hobbies, Inc., to Hoyt, July 2, 1976], 1976

- “17. 1978_03_19_Gary Gygax_01_rec’d” - .JPG [letter from Gary Gygax, TSR Hobbies, Inc., to Hoyt, March 19, 1978, page 1 of 2], 1978
- “18. 1978_03_19_Gary Gygax_02_rec’d” - .JPG [letter from Gary Gygax, TSR Hobbies, Inc., to Hoyt, March 19, 1978, page 2 of 2], 1978
- “19. 1978_08_12_John (unidentified)_01_rec’d” - .JPG [letter from John (no last name signed) to Hoyt, August 12, 1978], 1978
- “20. 1978_10_25_TSR_01_rec’d” - .JPG [letter from Marcus Mulkins, TSR Hobbies, Inc., to Hoyt, October 25, 1978], 1978
- “21. 1979_09_18_Phil Barker_01_rec’d” - .JPG [letter from Phil Barker to Hoyt, September 18, 1979], 1979
- “22. 1979_09_12_Brian Murphy_01_rec’d” - .JPG [letter from Brian Murphy to Phil Barker (accompanies 9/18 letter from Barker to Hoyt), September 12, 1979, page 1 of 2], 1979
- “23. 1979_09_12_Brian Murphy_02_rec’d” - .JPG [letter from Brian Murphy to Phil Barker (accompanies 9/18 letter from Barker to Hoyt), September 12, 1979, page 2 of 2], 1979
- “24. 2004_11_16_Games Workshop_01_rec’d” - .JPG [letter from Eric Sarlin, Games Workshop, to Hoyt, November 16, 2004], 2004
- “25. 2013-2014_to Jon Peterson_01_sent” - .ODT [compiled texts from Hoyt to Jon Peterson, 2013-2014], 2014
- “26. 2013_03_31_to Jon Peterson_01_sent” - .RTF [text from Hoyt to Jon Peterson, March 31, 2013], 2013
- “27. 2013_04_01_to Dave Wesely_01_sent” - .RTF [text from Hoyt to Dave Wesely, April 1, 2013], 2013
- “28. 2013_10_14_to Jon Peterson_01_sent” - .RTF [texts from Hoyt to Jon Peterson, October 2013], 2013
- “29. Undated_Dave Arneson_01_rec’d” - .JPG [note from Dave Arneson to Hoyt, n.d.], n.d.
- “30. Undated_Dave Wesely_01_rec’d” - .JPG [letter from Dave Wesely to Hoyt, n.d., page 1 of 5], n.d.
- “31. Undated_Dave Wesely_02_rec’d” - .JPG [letter from Dave Wesely to Hoyt, n.d., page 2 of 5], n.d.
- “32. Undated_Dave Wesely_03_rec’d” - .JPG [letter from Dave Wesely to Hoyt, n.d., page 3 of 5], n.d.
- “33. Undated_Dave Wesely_04_rec’d” - .JPG [letter from Dave Wesely to Hoyt, n.d., page 4 of 5], n.d.
- “34. Undated_Dave Wesely-card_05_rec’d” - .JPG [letter from Dave Wesely to Hoyt, n.d., page 5 of 5], n.d.
- “35. Undated_Dean Minton_01_rec’d” - .JPG [letter from Dean Minton to Hoyt, n.d., page 1 of 3]
- “36. Undated_Dean Minton_02_rec’d” - .JPG [letter from Dean Minton to Hoyt, n.d., page 2 of 3]
- “37. Undated_Dean Minton_03_rec’d” - .JPG [letter from Dean Minton to Hoyt, n.d., page 3 of 3]
- “38. Undated_Duke-Custom Cast_01_rec’d” - .JPG [letter from Duke (no last name signed), Custom Cast, Inc., to Hoyt, n.d.], n.d.

- “39. Undated_Jim Clark to Hoyt_01_recd” - .JPG [index card with note “To Lt. Col. Hoyt of the Landwehr Batt. in Braunstein Area,” signed “Brig. V. Kralc, n.d.], n.d.
- “40. Undated_to Gary Gygax_01_sent” - .JPG [letter to Gary Gygax, unidentified senders, n.d., page 1 of 5], n.d.
- “41. Undated_to Gary Gygax_02_sent” - .JPG [letter to Gary Gygax, unidentified senders, n.d., page 2 of 5], n.d.
- “42. Undated_to Gary Gygax_03_sent” - .JPG [letter to Gary Gygax, unidentified senders, n.d., page 3 of 5], n.d.
- “43. Undated_to Gary Gygax_04_sent” - .JPG [letter to Gary Gygax, unidentified senders, n.d., page 4 of 5], n.d.
- “44. Undated_to Gary Gygax_05_sent” - .JPG [letter to Gary Gygax, unidentified senders, n.d., page 5 of 5], n.d.

Series II: Student narratives, n.d. [c. 1970s]

Scope and Content Note: Per the Autumn 1975 issue of *The Strategic Review* by E. Gary Gygax: “John Bobek and Bill Hoyt have used D&D as a teaching aid in grade school classes. Bill has a great little book of accounts of adventures and illustrations of monsters prepared by 6th graders.” (This is also mentioned in the letter from Gygax to Hoyt in Series I, Folder 1, File 12.) While the booklet cited in the *Strategic Review*, labeled as “6th Grade Social Studies: Medieval Fantasy Unit” is part of Object 116.7674 in the museum collections, the images of narratives in this digital series focus on a scenario based in London in 1180. Though undated, these London stories are likely from around the same time period as the medieval fantasy stories (c. 1974) included with Object ID 116.7674.

Digital - II

Folder 1

Folder 01_Student narratives [25 files]

Contains 25 .JPG files [narrative stories from more than two dozen students (scenario: 1180 in London)], n.d. [c. 1970s]

Series III: Gaming history, 1968-2017

Scope and Content Note: This series holds digital files such as text, photos, and audio. The first folder includes typewritten narratives from Hoyt, including recollections about the creation of Dungeons & Dragons. The second folder contains images and descriptive audio recorded by Hoyt. Other folders include photographs (some with captions) and scans of original newsletters created by Dave Arneson, including the first issue of *Corner of the Table* (then called *Corner of the Tabletop*) from 1968.

Digital - III

Folder 1

Folder 01_Hoyt narratives [3 files]

- “01. Origins of Dungeons and Dragons_2016” - .ODT [“origin of Dungeons & Dragons” remembrance by Hoyt], 2016

- “02. Hla’kku the Lost and Koyon_2014” - .ODT [“Hla’kku and the Jaka’lla Underworld” remembrance and character narrative by Hoyt], 2014
 - “03. Playing with Phil_2015” - .ODT [“Playing with Baker” remembrance by Hoyt], 2015
- Folder 2 **Folder 02_Slideshow audio and images** [43 files]
 Contains 43 .JPGs, .PNGs, .WMAs [photographs and recorded audio to narrate slideshow presentation by Hoyt], 2013-2016
- Folder 3 **Folder 03_Braunstein** [3 files]
 - “01. The Brown Stein from Wesely” - .JPG [photo of Brown Stein], n.d. [2014]
 - “02. Braunstein song sheet” - .JPG [scan of student songs, “A Brown Stein for Braunstein University”], n.d. [2014]
 - “03. Brown Stein” - .ODT [“Brown Stein” game narrative by Hoyt], 2014
- Folder 4 **Folder 04_The Temple of Vimúhla** [68 files]
 Contains 68 .JPGs [models of Temple of Vimúhla, Lord of Fire for *Empire of the Petal Throne* game played at GenCon IX, 1976], n.d. [c. 1976]
- Folder 5 **Folder 05_Newsletters** [43 files]
 Contains 43 .JPG files [scanned pages of newsletters (*Corner of the Tabletop*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1968; *Corner of the Table*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 1968; *Corner of the Table*, Vol. 1, No. 5, 1968; *Corner of the Table*, Vol. 1, No. 6, 1968), 1968
- Folder 6 **Folder 06_Other photographs** [12 files]
 Contains 12 graphics files [photos of dice, game box, signatures on book title pages], c. 1975-2017 and n.d.

Series IV: Reference, 1965-2014

Scope and Content Note: This series contains images of reference materials, such as news articles on war gaming/tabletop gaming and a guide to military symbols produced by the U.S. Army. Also part of this series is a release form signed by Hoyt for a documentary production.

Digital - IV

- Folder 1 **Folder 01_Articles** [16 files]
 Contains 16 .JPG files [scans of articles on tabletop gaming, war gaming, Dungeons & Dragons], 1966-2012 and n.d.
- Folder 2 **Folder 02_Army military symbols** [20 files]
 Contains 20 .JPG files [scans of U.S. Army Military Symbols publication], 1966
- Folder 3 **Folder 03_Release form** [1 file]
 Contains 1 .PDF file [release form for Bill Hoyt for Fantasy Games Film, LLC production], 2014