

University of North Texas Media Library Gaming Collection Proposal

Kim Stanton  
Diane Robson  
Patrick Durkee

University of North Texas  
July 2011

## **Introduction: The UNT Gaming Collection Is Ready to Expand**

The UNT Media Library believes that academic libraries' development of video game collections for use in curricula and research is at a pivotal moment. The movement to establish game collections on university campuses has gained steady momentum in the last decade, and a growing literature on the management and uses of gaming in academic settings has outlined its importance.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, the UNT Media Library's gaming collection has reached the stage in its own history in which it is poised to expand in ways that will create a collection of greater and more diverse utility to the UNT community. Having witnessed the collection's importance to UNT since its 2009 inception, Media Library staff members have carefully studied possibilities of expanding and diversifying the gaming collection in ways that will both serve the UNT campus community more fully and make UNT into a leader in innovative collection development for non-traditional media among the broader community of university libraries.

The Media Library originally established its gaming collection in response to the growing need for gaming materials at UNT. Beginning in 1993, the university has offered courses in game programming and design, recognizing that in addition to the important cultural impact of gaming, the video game industry encompasses dozens of job disciplines and is an important potential employer for UNT graduates. Gaming-related courses taught at UNT are:

- ART 4176. Art and Design of the Computer Game
- CSCE 4210. Game Programming I
- CSCE 4215. Programming Math and Physics for Games

---

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Smith, B. (2008). Twenty-first century game studies in the academy: libraries and an emerging discipline. *Reference Services Review* 36(2), 205-220; Laskowski, M. & Ward, D. (2009). Building next generation video game collections in academic libraries. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 35 (3), 267-273.

- CSCE 4220. Game Programming II
- CSCE 4250. Topics in Game Development
- CSCE 5250. Introduction to Game Programming
- CSCE 5260. 3D Game Programming
- CSCE 5265. Advanced Topics in Game Development
- CECS 5120. Authoring Learning Games, Sims and Virtual Environments
- RTVF 4410. Media Studies Topics
  - Video Game Theory, Design, and Culture
- RTVF 5515. Media Genres and Authors
  - Video Game Theory, Design, and Culture

In seeking to expand the UNT gaming collection, the Media Library has considered carefully that the actions librarians take now to lay the foundations of gaming collection development have the potential for enormous influence in the future history of games and gaming in academic settings. Consequently, we have established a set of collection development principles for the gaming collection that both addresses the challenges and opportunities of the moment and establishes a framework for a vital and nimble application of acquisition policy in the future. Moreover, based on that vision, the Media Library has, in turn, devised a practical plan for gaming collection development in the immediate future that will support gaming in diverse campus settings, from software engineering and cultural studies research to the Media Library's *Game On!* events and dormitory socials.

### **Collection Development**

The Media Library's video game collection supports academic research on the technical aspects of video game development, the study of mass media and popular culture, and the vitality

of student life. In order to ensure that UNT's gaming collection both serves the specific needs of the UNT community and remains alert to new directions in collecting non-traditional media by university libraries nationally, the Media Library's collection development establishes the following principles:

- Serve current campus needs while planning for future directions in this quickly-developing field
- Ensure that investments in game formats and hardware support future use and access

Please see Appendix A: UNT Media Library Video Game Collection Development Policy.

### **The Current State of the Collection and Circulation Policies**

#### **The Collection**

Focusing on mainstream materials of high popular interest, the Media Library currently collects and circulates games, consoles, and supporting equipment. The collection's games span a number of popular genres and formats, encompassing, for example, such diverse titles as the ecologically-themed *Endless Ocean: Blue World* for Wii, the warfare-based *Call of Duty* series for Xbox 360 and Playstation 3, and the classic arcade game-descended *New Super Mario Bros.* for Nintendo DS. The collection is comprised specifically of:

- Games for the top-selling video game manufacturers: Wii, Xbox 360, PlayStation 2, PlayStation 3, Nintendo DS, and PlayStation Portable (PSP)
- Game consoles: Nintendo Wii, Nintendo DS, Xbox 360, Xbox 360 with Kinect, Playstation 3, Playstation 3 with Move, and PlayStation Portable (PSP)
- As of Spring 2011, the UNT Library owns 284 games.

- The average checkout for games in the Media Library is 26 checkouts over the 1.5 years the collection has been available.

### **Collection Use Policies: Checkout and Fines**

Video games are available for checkout to students for three days. Faculty and staff may check out video games for 7 days. Overdue items incur a fine of \$2.00 per day. Faculty are exempt from fines.

Video game consoles are available for checkout to students, faculty, and staff for three days. Overdue items incur a fine of \$5.00 per day. Faculty are exempt from fines

### **Collection Goals**

Our immediate goal is to grow the collection inexpensively through donations, the purchase of personal computers, the acquisition of free games through Internet access, and the expansion of our collection of console games by establishing accounts that will allow us to download games to our existing consoles. PC gaming will allow access to many of the free games available online, and we also plan to attain serial subscriptions to online sites for PC gaming, an economical method of providing access to many games. Console accounts will provide an efficient means of expanding and diversifying the collection. During the summer of 2011 the Media Library will begin an initiative to build relationships with UNT alumni who are professionals in gaming fields and the video game companies with whom they are affiliated. We especially hope that such relationships will bring donations of cutting-edge games recently released or still in development.

#### *Immediate Collection Goals*

- Attain donations from and build relationships with UNT alumni and associated gaming companies

- Attain at least one PC
- Attain at least one serial subscription
- Add a substantial portion of free games to the collection through Internet access
- Establish Media Library accounts with game and console manufacturers that allow us to add downloadable console games to the collection

In the long term, we plan to enlarge the utility of the collection for research and curriculum by expanding the content of the games we collect, the capabilities of our hardware platforms, and the diversity of spaces for using the game collection in the Media Library.

#### *Long-Term Collection Goals*

- Enlarge the scope of the content of the games we collect to include serious and artistic games
- Attain a more broad-based set of hardware platforms on which to provide access to games, including PCs, handheld devices, and new generations of gaming consoles and equipment
- Repurpose the Media Library's existing physical space to accommodate greater and more diverse use of the collection in-house

### **Long-Term Collection Development Strategies: Content, Access Technologies, Hardware, and Media Library Space**

#### **Content**

The core of the Media Library's game collection consists of popular titles produced by major game manufacturers, since we feel this body of work best reflects the needs of campus users. At the same time, we also plan to pursue acquisitions from outside the commercial

mainstream of gaming, collecting independent, artistic, and “serious” games. Moreover, we plan to provide access to MMOs (massively multi-player online games), which represent unique and important sites of gaming culture. It is important to note that significant numbers of such games, including some of the most popular and influential MMOs are available for free online, and the Media Library expects to take advantage of an expanding sector of free online materials in building the collection in the years ahead.

### *Independent and Artistic Games*

Independent games span a broad range of productions, from games designed for the commercial market but produced and marketed by individuals or small companies, to games designed and distributed for the sake of craft and artistry and made available for free. Artistic games are works in which the primary intent of the game designer is to explore the video game medium as an art form. The world of independent games hold great potential for a university gaming collection because it features the true cutting edge of game design and aesthetics, as well as games that expand the meaning of the video game form beyond the commercial realm to realms of art and broad social utility.

### *Serious Games*

“Serious games” denotes the world of video games that are designed for educational, therapeutic, or instructional purposes, and they also include games designed as a form of commercial advertising. Serious games relate to diverse academic fields, finding uses in scientific and social research, physical and cognitive therapy, public policy education, and other fields with significant roots in academia. The UNT Media Library expects to see significant

growth in interest in serious games across the university community in the next decade and is shaping the collection to respond to the growing influence of this sector of gaming.

### *MMOs*

Massively multiplayer online gaming (MMO) is a hugely popular genre available primarily for PC play. Access to MMOs is increasingly important to a successful gaming collection since they have become the object of academic study because of their wide-ranging cultural impact.<sup>2</sup> Access to MMOs represents an essential resource for the study of the sociology of gaming, as well as game design.

### ***Content Challenges and Actions***

- Continued access to online Internet materials
- Licensing agreements: virtually all new software and websites contain terms of use and software licenses that the library and, potentially, the University Legal Office will need to review.

### **Access Technologies**

#### *Downloadable Games for Consoles and PCs*

As the Media Library plans for acquiring and maintaining the next generation of games and game platforms, our collection must encompass downloadable games, which are increasingly prevalent for both PCs and game consoles

#### *Browser-Based Games for PCs*

---

<sup>2</sup> Prominent scholars of the social impact and meanings of MMOs include Palo Alto Research Center research scientist Nick Yee and Rutgers University biologist Nina Fefferman, whose research addresses how communication in MMOs sheds light on epidemiology.



Likewise, the maturation of cloud computing services has made available browser-based gaming by subscription service. Access to games in this form remains limited, but is sure to grow in coming years, becoming an important part of the collection's PC game access.

### *Subscription Access*

Given the acquisition of PCs dedicated to in-library gaming, however, the Media Library could make use of Internet gaming subscriptions services as a primary method of making gaming materials available to our patrons. Acquiring games in this way promises access to large numbers of games in a fashion that is inexpensive compared to the acquisition of individual discs and cartridges and can add historical depth to the collection. The Media Library intends to limit such materials to in-library use, overseeing their access by patrons on Media Library PCs.

### *Access Technologies Challenges and Actions*

- Continued access: like online book subscription sites, game subscription sites rotate their game offerings based on licensing and other conditions of availability. The Media Library will regularly monitor the contents of online subscriptions to ensure that offerings support research and curricula.

### **Hardware Acquisitions**

- *PCs*

Essential to the Media Library's plans for expanding the scope of its collection is the acquisition of PCs. Taking advantage of the full range of Internet subscription services and accessing the worlds of independent, artistic, and serious games requires the use of PCs. Many of the most innovative games, in both commercial and non-commercial genres, are available only for PC play.

- *Ethernet Hub*

A relatively inexpensive acquisition that will bring great benefit to the Media Library's gaming program, especially our *Game On!* events, is an Ethernet hub which will allow us to create our own small network for multiple-player gaming in the library. Even without the acquisition of PCs for the gaming program, an Ethernet hub will still be quite useful, since students can use it in the Media Library to connect their personal PCs, providing an additional gaming venue for *Game On!*

- *Handheld Devices for Games/Apps*

Handheld devices such as smart phones and tablets are increasingly important platforms for game playing as many popular games are developed specifically for this type of device. Having access to an Ipad or Itouch allows access to such games and other, non-gaming applications.

### ***Hardware Challenges and Actions***

- Continued usability of platform formats
- Keeping up with new platform formats
- Attaining the range of formats we need for access to the full range of games we want in the collection

In order to meet these challenges, the Media Library will carefully review the purchase of hardware and equipment to ensure we purchase only materials that will clearly support access to a wide-range of materials central to the collection.

### **New Spaces**

#### ***Gaming Center***

An important part of the Media Library's gaming program has been providing spaces within the UNT Libraries for gaming, which we have done through our *Game On!* events and

our more recent addition, the Gaming Station in the Media Library. Introduced in summer 2011, the Gaming Station has been used heavily, which has demonstrated concretely the campus community's desire for expanded gaming spaces in Chilton Hall. Fortunately, by carefully reconfiguring the existing space in the Media Library, we now also have the opportunity to create a full-fledged gaming center. We have created a provisional plan to convert room 111D into a learning space for UNT students with interests—both curricular and extracurricular—in gaming. By completing a small amount of renovation in our main carrel area in order to create a new office space for our cataloging operations, we can transform 111D into a dedicated space with resources for students to research or create games. Within the gaming lab, we envision at least two gaming spaces equipped with consoles and headsets along with as many as five gaming-suitable computers with access to our full collection of games available for PC play. Yet another section of the gaming lab can house computers dedicated to creating games or playing student-created games. We are particularly interested in acquiring for this section of the gaming lab an Xbox Kinect 360 camera, which can be used for game modification and creation employing software recently released by Microsoft.

### ***Space Challenges and Actions***

- Attaining equipment

The Media Library has space available for a gaming center; we need to attain the equipment for it through direct donations or funding.

