CfP: Game Canon & Game History
Virtual workshop on 13 February 2024

Games have developed into a significant form of cultural expression, important to archive and to investigate in relation to other established cultural forms. They are collected by various cultural institutions. The selection of computer games varies not only with regard to the profile of the institution, but also in relation to format, accompanying material, and in particular the consoles which are used. For pragmatic reasons, collecting institutions define specific criteria for the cultural objects to be collected. How can these criteria be defined for a game collection in order to achieve a documentation of game history that is as broad, varied, and diverse as possible? Is it possible to apply the debates about canon found in literature and film studies, as well as the practices bound up with them like retrospectives in cultural centers and film museums, to games? What are the milestones of game culture? Which approaches present themselves for games, and how are they different from other media and archival practices? What, beyond the code or the game board, should be archived in game collections? What is of interest in terms of game mechanics, technology, and narrative? What relations of dependence present themselves between software and hardware? Can the history of games be written in national terms? What does a pluralistic game history or a game history from below look like? These questions will be discussed over the course of this workshop's four sections.

Format: Three ten-minute presentations per theme, followed by 15-20 minutes of questions and discussion.

Focus 1: Criteria and Concepts of Collection
Focus 2: Game Mechanics Milestones
Focus 3: Technical Milestones in Game Archiving
Focus 4: Canon Critique and Canon Debate in Game Studies?

- Please submit a proposal with a length of max. 10 paragraphs/sentences for a 10-minute presentation by 15 November 2023. Orientation towards one of the 4 themes above is advised.
- Please attach a short CV/list of publications.
- Please submit your abstract via this portal.
- The language of the workshop is English.

Concept and Organization:
Dîlan Canan Çakir *(Freie Universität Berlin, EXC2020 "Temporal Communities")*
Anna Kinder *(DLA Marbach, Forschungsverbund MWW)*
Andreas Rauscher *(Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg, Hochschule Kaiserslautern Virtual Design, AG Games)*

Contact and questions: Dîlan Canan Çakir, dilan.cakir@fu-berlin.de
Registration (without submission): Birgit Wollgarten, forschung@dla-marbach.de

Focus 1: Criteria and concepts of collection

Which institutions or establishments are at present significantly involved in the collection and archiving of video games, and what criteria do they use for their selection? How have concepts and criteria for the collection of video games evolved over time, especially with regard to their recognition as cultural heritage? To what extent can existing collecting and cataloging criteria be productively adapted, and where is new ground being broken? What role do state institutions and museums play in the collection and archiving of video games as opposed to private or commercial collections and institutions?

Focus 2: Game mechanics milestones

What are the most significant game mechanics milestones or innovations in the history of video games and why have they had such a lasting impact on the industry? Which games are considered pioneers for particular game mechanics concepts and should be archived? How have advances in hardware and software influenced the development of game mechanics? What trends in game mechanics have been particularly prominent in recent years, and how have they changed gameplay in contemporary games? How do cultural and social trends influence the development of game mechanics, particularly in relation to issues such as storytelling, inclusivity, and ethics? What role do indie developers play in creating and exploring new ideas in game mechanics, and how do they influence the industry as a whole? How can forgotten or overlooked paths in game history be retrospectively explored?

Focus 3: Technical Milestones in Game Archiving.

What strategies are institutions using to ensure that video games remain accessible for future generations, especially in light of rapidly evolving technologies? How can developers and the gaming community help support and enrich video game collection and archiving? What existing resources, such as walkthroughs and Let's Play videos, can be used to support archiving? How can the gaming industry itself help support the archiving and preservation of its own history, and how are the interests of the industry and archiving compatible?

Focus 4: Canon Critique and Canon Debate in Game Studies?

Is there a game canon? If so, do we need it? How has the game studies canon developed over time, and which games or genres are recognized today as important milestones or key works? Who determines a possible game canon and how does this affect its contents in terms of genres, studios, communities, and so on? What are the challenges of creating a canon for video games, especially given the multiplicity of platforms, genres, and cultural influences? How can canon criticism help overcome stereotypical or outdated notions about games and players and enable new research perspectives? To what extent are historical and cultural contexts relevant in evaluating games for the canon and how can they be incorporated into research? What responsibilities do researchers and institutions in game studies have to ensure that the canon is diverse and representative and adequately reflects the diversity of gaming experiences?