

## Finding Aid to the David Shepperd Papers, 1974-2018

### Summary Information

**Title:** David Shepperd papers

**Creator:** David Shepperd (primary)

**ID:** 118.10908

**Date:** 1974-2018 (inclusive); 1974-1976 (bulk)

**Extent:** Approx. 1.5 linear feet

**Language:** The materials in this collection are in English.

**Abstract:** The David Sheppard papers include an Altair 8000 manual and schematics, instruction manuals, circuit schematics, handwritten computer coding notes, source code print out, and paper tape. The bulk of the materials are from 1974-1976.

**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.

**Conditions Governing Access:** Due to the nature of the printed source code on perforated, connected printer paper, reference scans of these pages may only be available at the discretion of the library staff; on-site access is freely available. At this time, paper tape is considered to be an artifact only and cannot be scanned or otherwise “read.” Please see The Strong’s Digital Games Files Access Policy.

**Custodial History:** The David Shepperd papers were donated to The Strong in December 2018 as a gift from David Shepperd. The papers were accessioned by The Strong under Object ID 118.10908 and were received from David Shepperd in one shipment, along with an Altair 8800 computer (Object ID 118.10906).

**Preferred citation for publication:** David Shepperd papers, Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play at The Strong

**Processed by:** Cassidy Smith, July 2019

### Controlled Access Terms

#### Personal Names

- Shepperd, David

#### Corporate Names

- Micro Instrumentation and Telemetry Systems

## Subjects

- Altair 8800
- Circuit schematics
- Computer programming
- Computer programming--Handbooks, manuals, etc.
- Computer simulation
- Computers--Handbooks, manuals, etc.
- Game design and development
- Source code (Computer science)
- Spacewar (Game)
- Video games--History

## Biographical Note

David Shepperd is an American software professional. Throughout his career, he has worked as a programmer (among other positions) at Atari Games, Tengen, Midway, and Time Warner Interactive.

In 1974, Shepperd played Nutting Associates' *Computer Space*, the first commercially released video arcade game, and was inspired to design his very own at home. Though his first attempt produced only a single sprite that could simply move around a television screen, he found much more success a year later when Micro Instrumentation and Telemetry Systems (MITS) released the Altair 8800, one of the first home computers to use a microprocessor. Shepperd purchased a basic kit with 1K of static memory and cobbled together peripherals from previously discarded projects, completing several simple games programmed using banks of switches on the front of the computer. He later connected an electric typewriter keyboard and created two basic controllers with knobs.

In 1976, Shepperd saw an advertisement for microprocessor programmers from Atari, and his experience with the Altair 8800 landed him the position. As only the second programmer to be hired, Shepperd worked on a variety of games; his first was the simple baseball game *Flyball*. Shepperd's first breakout success came from *Night Driver*, the very first driving game played from a first-person perspective, which also served to show the incredible potential of using microprocessors in video games. Shepperd continued to work for Atari until 2003, designing games such as *Starship 1*, *Asteroids Deluxe*, and *Hard Drivin'*.

## Collection Scope and Content Note

The David Shepperd papers include a manual for the Altair 8800, handwritten coding notes, circuit schematics, paper tape, source code print outs, and other reference materials with information on circuitry and computer-building. The bulk of the materials are from 1974-1976, predating his formal career in the video game industry.

The David Shepperd papers are arranged into two series. The materials are housed in three archival document boxes and one oversized folder.

## System of Arrangement

Series I: Manuals and coding, 1974-2018 and n.d.

Series II: Source code printouts and paper tape, 1974-1976 and n.d.

## Contents List

### Series I: Manuals and coding, 1974-2018 and n.d.

**Scope and Content Note:** This series contains Altair 8800 manual sections, schematics, instruction manuals, and handwritten computer coding notes; the materials were heavily utilized or created by Shepperd. Also included in this series is a copy of the provenance letter from Shepperd detailing his experience with the Altair 8800 and associated equipment.

#### Box 1

- Folder 1 Provenance letter from David Shepperd, June 18, 2018
- Folder 2 *Altair 8800: Theory of Operation Manual and Schematics*, 1975 [Part 1 of 2]
- Folder 3 *Altair 8800: Theory of Operation Manual and Schematics*, 1975 [Part 2 of 2]
- Folder 4 Instruction manuals, circuit schematics, and computer coding notes, 1974-2007 and n.d.

#### Box 2

- Folder 1 Handwritten schematics, n.d. [c. 1974-1975]
- Folder 2 Printed schematics with alignments, n.d. [c. 1974-1976]
- Folder 3 Coding notes, n.d. [c. 1974-1975]

#### Oversized

- Folder 1 Various program schematics, 1975 and n.d.

### Series II: Source code printouts and paper tape, 1974-1976 and n.d.

**Scope and Content Note:** This series includes source code printouts (including one page of *Pong*), as well as paper tape for the Altair 8000 system (possibly including *Spacewar*).

#### Box 2

- Folder 4 “Bad Memory Chips” source code printout, 1975
- Folder 5 “Demodrby” source code printout, 1976
- Folder 6 “IPL” source code printout, n.d. [1974-1976?]
- Folder 7 “Pong” source code printout, 1976 [1 page only]

#### Box 3

- Object 1 “MTSMEMØ memory test” paper tape, n.d. [1976?]
- Object 2 “Spacewar Source” paper tape, 1976
- Object 3 “Demodrby” source paper tape, 1976
- Object 4 “MTS load without verify” paper tape, n.d. [1976?]
- Object 5 “Memory test - Org at 3000 (Ø-ØFFF)” paper tape, n.d. [1976?]
- Object 6 “MTSLOAD” paper tape, 1976

- Object 7 “MTSLD source” paper tape, 1976
- Object 8 “Demolition Derby with cursor” paper tape, n.d. [1976?]
- Object 9 “MTSMEM-memory test (OOO-FFF) ORG 3000” paper tape, n.d. [1976?]
- Object 10 “Convert to decimal routine source” paper tape, 1976
- Object 11 “Demodrby” paper tape, n.d. [1976?]
- Object 12 “Core dump PGM source” paper tape, 1976