

Finding Aid to the Joyce A. Weisbecker Papers, 1976-1982

Summary Information

Title: Joyce A. Weisbecker papers

Creator: Joyce A. Weisbecker (primary)

ID: 121.1207a

Date: 1976-1982 (inclusive)

Extent: 0.2 linear feet

Language: The materials in this collection are in English.

Abstract: The Joyce A. Weisbecker papers contain documentation related to her contract programming work for RCA in 1976-1977.

Repository:

Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play at The Strong

One Manhattan Square

Rochester, New York 14607

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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, she has given permission for The Strong to make copies in all media for museum, educational, and research purposes.

Custodial History: The Joyce A. Weisbecker papers were donated to The Strong in July 2021 as a gift of Joyce Ann Weisbecker. The papers were accessioned by The Strong under Object ID 121.1207 and were received from Weisbecker in one envelope, along with the Joseph A. Weisbecker licensing agreement documentation, 1968-1971 (AS resource ID 121.1207b).

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Controlled Access Terms

Personal Names

- Weisbecker, Joseph A.
- Weisbecker, Joyce Ann
- Wenger, Fred G.

Corporate Names

- RCA Corporation
- RCA Corporation. Distributor & Special Products Division

Subjects

- Cosmac VIP
- Electronic games industry
- Game design and development
- Programming
- RCA Studio II
- Speedway/Tag (Computer game)
- TV School House I (Computer game)
- Video game industry
- Video games--Design
- Women in Games

Biographical Note

Joyce Ann Weisbecker (1958–) is an American engineer and actuary. She is recognized as the first female commercial video game designer.

The daughter of a teacher and an RCA engineer, Weisbecker learned how to program on her father Joseph's experimental homemade computer system, which they called "FRED" (for "Flexible Recreational & Educational Device"). After graduating high school, Joseph Weisbecker asked Joyce if she would like to program video games for RCA, and she was hired as a contractor in 1976. For the RCA Studio II, Joyce programmed *TV School House I* (a two-player computer quiz which required the use of a supplemental question booklet) and the combination cartridge *Speedway—Tag* (a racing game and a chase/tag game, both for two players). She estimated that these games took about 200 hours of work in full to program. Joyce also programmed three additional games for the RCA Cosmac VIP [*Slide*, *Sum Fun*, and *Sequence Shoot*] while under contract with RCA.

Weisbecker double-majored in Computer Engineering and Actuarial Science at Rider College (now, University). After working as an actuary for nearly 20 years, she earned a Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering and a Master's degree in Computer Science. She has since retired.

For additional information on Weisbecker, see Benj Edwards' interview "[Rediscovering History's Lost First Female Video Game Designer](#)," published by *Fast Company* in 2017.

Collection Scope and Content Note

The Joyce A. Weisbecker papers are a collection of correspondence, invoices, agreements, and program printouts retained by Weisbecker while working as a contractor for RCA from 1976-1977. She programmed games for both the RCA Studio II and the Cosmac VIP.

The Joyce A. Weisbecker papers have been arranged into one series and are housed in one archival document box.

System of Arrangement

Series I: RCA programming documentation, 1976-1982

Contents List**Series I: RCA programming documentation, 1976-1982**

Scope and Content Note: This series houses documentation retained by Weisbecker while employed by RCA as an independent contractor from 1976-1977. Materials include correspondence, invoices, an agreement, and program printouts. Correspondence from 1982 in this series describes copyright claim status for *Speedway/Tag* and *TV School House I*.

Box 1

- Folder 1 RCA Studio II quiz program printout and statement, August 1976 [*TV School House I*]
- Folder 2 Agreement letter and amendments, August 1976
- Folder 3 RCA Studio II tag/speedway program printouts and statement, October-November 1976 [*Speedway/Tag*]
- Folder 4 RCA Purchase Order, "Time and professional services from Joyce Weisbecker for developing and coding computer tag/speedway program for Studio II tv game product," December 9, 1976
- Folder 5 RCA Purchase Order, "Software Package for VIP," Joyce Weisbecker, July 11, 1978
- Folder 6 Invoice and memo, "Software Package for VIP," October 6, 1978
- Folder 7 Invoice, "Software Package for VIP," February 1, 1979
- Folder 8 RCA Purchase Order, "Software Package for VIP," Joyce Weisbecker, February 23, 1979
- Folder 9 RCA correspondence to Joyce Weisbecker, Copyright Docket 31, Reg. No. 814-615, "Speedway/Tag," April 2, 1982
- Folder 10 RCA correspondence to Joyce Weisbecker, Copyright Docket 27, Reg. No. 814-617, "TV School House I," April 2, 1982