

## Finding Aid to the Will Wright Collection, 1990-2010

### Summary Information

**Title:** Will Wright collection

**Creator:** Will Wright (primary); The Strong (secondary)

**ID:** 2013.wright

**Date:** 1990-2010

**Extent:** 1.25 linear feet

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

**Abstract:** The Will Wright collection is a compilation of donated materials from Will Wright and documentation gathered by staff at The Strong. Within this collection are nine original game design notebooks from Wright and information on Wright's keynote address at a 2010 gaming conference.

**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 Will Wright papers were donated to The Strong in August 2010 as a gift from Will and Kim Wright. Nine design notebooks were accessioned by the museum as Object IDs 110.1575 and 110.1626 through 110.1633. Additional materials were added to the collection by staff members of The Strong, also in 2010.

**Preferred citation for publication:** Will Wright collection, Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play at The Strong

**Processed by:** Julia Novakovic, July 2013

**Revision Note:** Finding aid updated in November 2017 to reflect the two objects returning to the collection from exhibition in the museum's *eGameRevolution* exhibit.

### Controlled Access Terms

#### Personal Names

- Wright, Will (William Ralph), 1960-

#### Corporate Names

- Electronic Arts (Firm)
- Maxis (Firm)

**Subjects**

- Computer games industry
- Computer games--design.
- Electronic games industry--United States
- Electronic games--History
- SimCity (Game)
- SimCity 2000 (Game)
- SimCopter (Game)
- Spore (Game)
- The Sims (Game)

**Biographical Note**

William Ralph (“Will”) Wright is an American video game designer and co-founder of game development company Maxis (now part of Electronic Arts). He was born in Georgia in 1960 and later relocated to Louisiana. Growing up, Wright enjoyed building models and playing strategy games. Wright attended classes at Louisiana State University, Louisiana Tech, and The New School in Manhattan, studying a variety of topics that appealed to him: mechanical engineering, architecture, and robotics.

Wright acquired an interest in early computers and was influenced by Bill Budge’s *Pinball Construction Set* (1983)—software which allowed users to craft their own pinball playing field without any prior programming knowledge. He created a helicopter simulation game for his personal computer, and that game was then purchased and marketed by Broderbund Software. Wright decided to produce a game in which players could build their own city, but the concept was met with lukewarm response; no company wanted to produce a video game without a winner. Instead, Wright teamed up with Jeff Braun in 1986 to found Maxis, their own game development company. *SimCity* debuted in 1989 and was an immediate success. In 2009, Wright left Maxis for creative think tank The Stupid Fun Club.

The Sims game series, comprising *SimCity* and its various spin-offs, is one of the best-selling personal-computer game series of all time. Wright’s work on simulation games has made a considerable impact on the electronic gaming industry. He has received numerous awards and accolades, including lifetime achievement awards from *PC Magazine* and the Game Developers Choice Awards, along with induction into the Academy of Interactive Arts and Sciences’ Hall of Fame. As of 2013, Wright and his think tank colleagues are working for Syntertainment, a startup company focusing on high-quality mobile games.

### Collection Scope and Content Note

This basis of the Will Wright collection is a group of nine game design notebooks. These notebooks cover games such as *SimCity 2000* (1993), *SimCopter* (1996), *The Sims* (2000), and *Spore* (2008). These papers offer insight into the game design process and how Wright viewed the virtual worlds he created. The second part of this collection comprises information on the Engage! Conference and Expo from February 2010, featuring Will Wright as the keynote speaker. Files pertaining to the conference include a conference program, an audio CD of Wright's keynote address, two video CDs of Wright, a transcription of the keynote address, and a printout of the keynote address PowerPoint presentation. Additional scope and content information is listed for each series under the "Contents List" section of this finding aid.

The Will Wright collection is arranged into two series. The materials are housed in three archival document boxes.

### System of Arrangement

Series I: Will Wright Game Design Notebooks, 1990-2008

Series II: Engage! Conference and Expo Keynote Address, 2010

### Contents List

#### Series I: Will Wright Game Design Notebooks, 1990-2008

**Scope and Content Note:** This series contains nine notebooks of notes, drawings, and program code snippets created by Will Wright as part of his game design processes. Featured game designs include *SimCity 2000* (1993), *SimCopter* (1996), *The Sims* (2000), and *Spore* (2008). Wright designated the titles of his notebooks with sticky notes attached to each cover.

#### Box 1

Object 110.1575	Design notebook - Sims
Object 110.1626	Design notebook - Robot Wars, Maxis acquisitions, Sims
Object 110.1627	Design notebook - Sims and misc.
Object 110.1628	Design notebook - Misc.
Object 110.1629	Design notebook - SimCity 2000 and early Sims

#### Box 2

Object 110.1630	Design notebook - SimCopter and Sims
Object 110.1631	Design notebook - Early Spore
Object 110.1632	Design notebook - SimCopter and Sims
Object 110.1633	Design notebook - SimCity 2000 and early Sims work

**Series II: Engage! Conference and Expo Keynote Address, 2010**

**Scope and Content Note:** Within this series are documents, video, and audio pertaining to Will Wright's keynote address at the Engage! Conference and Expo from February 2010. These materials were compiled by staff members at The Strong. This subseries houses a conference program, both audio and video recordings of Wright, a transcript of the keynote address, and a printout of the PowerPoint accompanying Wright's presentation.

**Box 3**

- Folder 1 Engage! Conference and Expo - program, Feb. 2010
- Folder 2 Conference keynote address, audio and video, Feb. 2010
- Folder 3 Conference keynote address, transcript, 2010
- Folder 4 Conference keynote address, printout of PowerPoint presentation, "The Evolution of Entertainment - A Toy's Place," 2010