

Message, Ikast, Denmark, April 7th, 2014

World's largest video game collection available

Summary

Spilmuseet (The Games Museum) of Denmark is a private, self-financed preservation project that has worked for 12 years to secure the preservation of video games for posterity. This has been done in realization of the fact that the Danish state, contrary to current legislation and comparable media, has sent the games for destruction instead of preserving them. The work of Spilmuseet has now become the largest collection of video games in the world, but efforts to get the Danish state to accept its responsibility in the matter have failed. Therefore, the project is now available to other, more visionary countries.

Background

For the past 12 years, Spilmuseet has spent all its resources to collect and preserve as much of video game history as possible, before it was lost. This has resulted in a collection taking up a total area of 5,000 m² (54,000 sq ft), which is thus physically the largest collection in the world, as far as is known. The collection includes, among others, 10,000 complete games for consoles and computers, 500 consoles and computers, 1,000 controllers, 4,000 arcade games, 1,400 arcade machines and countless magazines, books, merchandise and spare parts.

The collecting strategy of Spilmuseet has primarily been to save games and related hardware that was in danger of being lost forever. Spilmuseet has focused on those items that are too difficult or not popular enough to be preserved by private collectors. This is why Spilmuseet's collection today represents a significant amount of historical games, where no other working examples are known to exist.

Objective

The objective of Spilmuseet is to ensure the same treatment for video games as the one given to film, books and music. The goal is to ensure the preservation of the media of video games, so current and future generations can experience the history of video games in its original form. The vision is to preserve all games in playable form, to secure our common digital cultural heritage.

To experience the original games, it is compellingly important to also preserve the original hardware. The media of video games is different from other cultural media, because it is an interactive, physical experience and interaction between man and machine. You cannot recreate the original game experience of *Space Invaders*, *Out Run* or *Time Crisis* by just saving the game data and emulating it on a modern computer.

One does not preserve Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* by photographing the painting and then throwing away the original work. Just like we preserve and restore the original painting we should, as far as possible, preserve the original games and the original hardware, to preserve the media of video games as it was in its original form, intended by the creators.

For very limited resources, Spilmuseet has proven that it is fully possible to preserve the original video game culture, exactly as one would preserve other cultural works in a museal framework. With the necessary base, it is possible to continue this preservation in the long term, and at the same time make it all fully publically available, so future generations can experience how the media has influenced the world. It is a mockery to the nature of the media to only focus on archiving and documenting the history of video games.

Status

While taking on the responsibility for collecting and preserving the media of video games as best as possible for more than a decade, Spilmuseet has - along with the Danish games industry, researchers and cultural figures - struggled to speak up the responsible parties in Denmark. For an even longer time – since 1998 – it has been Danish law that all digital games must be collected, preserved and made publically available by the state, but this has never happened. The money for the task is allocated, but has been spent on other media.

During all this, Spilmuseet has been in contact with countless ministers, politicians, government officials, museums, libraries and other government institutions. Reports and expositions have been written, and solid support has been procured from all experts and relevant parties. Action and solutions have been promised from the responsible parties time and time again. Nonetheless, nothing has happened in practice. Time has been dragged out so as to avoid that the conditions for video game preservation would change, or that anyone could be held responsible for the enormous failure that has happened to the media in Denmark.

The responsible parties have finally spent and worn out the motivation and energy for Spilmuseet to find a solution in Denmark, and have thus achieved what they wanted: that video games may be equal to other cultural works on paper, but in practice are sent away for destruction with merely a shrug of the shoulder. The same thing has happened earlier to other new cultural media, so the mistakes of the past are repeated again and again – and even though time will make wiser, it will be too late.

Offer

With this announcement, Spilmuseet chooses to make the entire project available to other countries. This includes Spilmuseet's complete collection, data and knowledge. In its current form, this includes all the necessary parts to create a tourist attraction on an international scale, and to secure a comprehensive and professional preservation of the media of video games in the long term.

Spilmuseet's demand for this is that such a solution should be based on a sustainable and long-term foundation, with the necessary will, interest and finances to secure the collection and make it available to the public in the long run. We believe that this could be wholly or partially managed by a state. Spilmuseet have no further demands as to how such a solution should be realised, but are open to any serious dialogue.

Spilmuseet wishes to point out that the collection is not available for sale or splitting up, and that it may not be used for any other purposes than preservation and being made available to the public.

Alternative

The offer stands until June 1st, 2014. If Spilmuseet by then hasn't received any serious requests, which likely would result in a better solution, the collection will instead be used in a strictly private manner in Denmark or elsewhere, with limited and semi-commercial public access. Spilmuseet will no longer consider itself responsible for preserving or making the media of video games available to the public. Also, there will be no further collaborations of any sort with any state, municipality, museum, library or other public institution.

We at Spilmuseet hope that others are more receptive and visionary than the Danish state, and that others will make an effort to preserve the media of video games. It is an important part of our cultural heritage, which is almost gone due to a lack of appreciation, knowledge and will.

Anyone interested in this offer is welcome to contact Spilmuseet by email. It is possible to visit Spilmuseet and personally inspect the collection by arrangement.

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