

The Serious Business of Fun: A Collection of Books on the Video Game Industry

I. Essay - Origins and Overview of Collection

In June 2015, my mother saw a notice at our local library about a book signing she thought I might find interesting. Although my fourteen-year-old self was skeptical at the idea of an author event as a fun summer outing, I was intrigued by the book's title *I Am Error: The Nintendo Family Computer/Entertainment System Platform*. As an avid gamer, I was surprised at the idea of there being a book about video games. It had never occurred to me that there was such a thing, so I agreed to go.

Descending the steps to the auditorium in the library basement, I had no idea what to expect. At the door, we were greeted by a young man welcoming people to the room. To my surprise, he was the author of the book: Dr. Nathan Altice, a recent PhD graduate of one of our local colleges, Virginia Commonwealth University. I'm not sure I had a definite idea what scholars should look like, but I had not imagined they would be so regular-seeming and friendly.

Much of Dr. Altice's talk went over my head, but he was so engaging and down-to-earth that I managed to follow along and became eager to learn more about the history of video games and the companies that developed the industry. Flipping through Dr. Altice's book on the ride home, I noticed that it contained a bibliography of other books about video games. That moment was the birth of my collection. Coming from a family of bibliophiles--my grandfather and mother are book collectors--it occurred to me that it would be meaningful to assemble and preserve material about this fascinating, multi-billion dollar industry.

I began by making a list of the books from *I Am Error* that sounded interesting and looked for copies on Amazon and Abebooks to see if I could afford to buy them. I had no trouble finding the titles I wanted and many of them were quite cheap as I was not picky about quality or first printings. Several of them cost just a few dollars. As my orders arrived in the mail, I checked them for references to other titles on video games.

Another approach I used for building my want list was searching for the phrase "video games" on Amazon, AbeBooks, and Worldcat, a website that lets users search library collections from around the world. I also found a few online bibliographies/lists of books about gaming. Especially useful were:

- "Best Video Games Books: Our Top 100+ List!" *The Unseen Collective*. www.unseen64.net/2016/11/05/best-video-games-books-top-100-list/. 11 May 2016.

- Tassi, Paul. “The 10 Best Books About Video Games.” *Forbes*.
www.forbes.com/sites/paultassi/2019/11/07/the-10-best-books-about-video-games/?sh=1a734c3b2f79. 7 Nov. 2019.

As my want list expanded, money inevitably became a problem. Although I did continue to have good luck finding cheap copies of many titles, there was a long list of books that exceeded my teenage budget. This was especially true for new titles and books published overseas. To address this problem, I added pricier books to my birthday and Christmas wish lists. Over the course of the next few years, I received several of my wants from family and friends as gifts.

Another problem I faced was realizing there were far more books on the subject of gaming than I had originally envisioned. While there are not many books from the early years of the industry (1980s and 1990s), there have been hundreds, if not thousands, of books on the subject published from 2000 through the present. Popular games often generate a flurry of publications, many of them guidebooks generated by fans. Also noteworthy, the academic field of video game studies exploded in the early 2000s, leading to numerous textbooks on game theory, politics, psychology, and design. Initially, I bought just about any title on the subject of video games that I found and could afford. However, I eventually decided that I was not interested in guidebooks for recent games. There were too many, and they generally did not contain useful information about the industry, the subject that had first caught my attention. I also decided to be cautious about acquiring academic books. In addition to being expensive, most of them do not deal with the business of gaming in any significant detail.

Gradually, I defined my collection as specifically being about the gaming industry. My goal became building a collection of books that detailed the histories of gaming companies and their products, many of which were full of intriguing ups and downs. However, when acquiring older titles (1980s to 1990s), I allow myself to take a broader view and acquire almost anything I can find on the subject of video games, even consumer guides and playing manuals. Although many of these books are not about the history of the industry *per se*, they offer a useful overview of early gaming technology and product development. (One early playing guide I find particularly interesting is *How to Master The Video Games* by Tom Hirschfield published in 1981. The “The” in the title reflects it being from an era in which there were only a modest number of games available all of which were relatively similar in concept and operation.) It also occurred to me that these early books probably had been published in small numbers and, therefore, were inherently worth preserving as historic artifacts.

About a year into my collecting, I decided to document my collection with a website that included basic publishing information about the books along with photographs of the covers. I also included a “Contact Me” page requesting that visitors let me know about titles that I was missing from my collection. Unfortunately, my website did not generate much traffic. Being so young, I did not have any expertise in search engine optimization and never managed to establish

a meaningful digital footprint for my website. However, I very much liked the process of organizing and inventorying my collection.

After starting college in 2018, I decided to close my website. I was so busy pursuing a major in Computer Science and a minor in Math that I had little time to devote to the site. Also, I became interested in documenting my collection using more traditional methods and eventually started creating the attached bibliography.

I have found the process of preparing a formal bibliography challenging. Even the most basic question of what order to put the books in required careful consideration. I ultimately decided to order them alphabetically for ease of reference and because it keeps books with multiple editions grouped together. However, I do want to note that a chronological ordering offers interesting insights into how the gaming industry has been documented in print. Many of the early books were issued by independent or self publishers and are informal in style. The few early books from big publishers are mass market paperbacks intended as entertainment. Not until around 2000 did mainstream and academic publishers actively enter the field in a serious way. From that point forward, many of the titles are quite sizable, beautifully illustrated, and extensively footnoted.

I also faced challenges when trying to identify publication information for the bibliography. In some cases, the title listed on the cover of a book does not match the interior title page. In consultation with my project advisor, Charlotte V. Priddle, I learned that librarians deal with this problem by using the name on the title page in case the book's cover is ever removed. I decided to follow that approach in my bibliography. In other cases, identifying the publishers proved difficult as they were mentioned in odd locations in the book or not listed at all. Of particular note in this latter regard are five books in my collection that contain no identifying information for the publisher but that were all published in Middletown, Delaware and share the same distinctive bright white paper. (See items no. 17, 47, 50, 55, 69.)

Another issue I debated was whether to list the dimensions of the books in inches or centimeters. Research into the issue revealed that this is a debate among bibliographers, with one camp arguing for inches as that is a scale that most readers in the United States will easily be able to visualize. Others argue for centimeters on the grounds that they are more exact and are used internationally. (Bowers, Fredson. *Principles of Bibliographic Design*. Oak Knoll Press, 2005, p. 430.) As the Library of Congress uses centimeters, I have chosen to do the same.

In terms of the future of my collection, I eventually hope to expand into acquiring magazines from the 1970s and 1980s that featured articles about the video game industry. I imagine a wealth of information was published in this more ephemeral format in the days before anyone thought to publish a book on the subject.

II. Bibliography

(Unless otherwise indicated, books are first editions, first printing.
Measurements are in centimeters.)

1. Ackerman, Dan. *The Tetris Effect: The Game That Hypnotized the World*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2016. 264 pages. Hardcover in dust jacket. (16 x 24).
2. Altice, Nathan. *I Am Error: The Nintendo Family Computer/Entertainment System Platform*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2015. 426 pages. Hardcover in dust jacket. (15.5 x 23.5).
Note: Signed by author.
3. Amis, Martin. *Invasion of the Space Invaders: An Addict's Guide to Battle Tactics, Big Scores and the Best Machines*. Millbrae, California: Celestial Arts, 1982. 125 pages. Paperback. (21 x 29.5).
Note: The author of this book is now an acclaimed novelist. This was one of his earliest published books. Also interesting, the book contains an introduction by Steven Spielberg.
4. Bissel, Tom. *Extra Lives: Why Video Games Matter*. New York: Vintage Books, 2011. 242 pages. Paperback. (13 x 20.25).
Note: Paperback edition (with additional material) of a hardcover book published by Pantheon in 2019; this is a third printing of the paperback edition.
5. Bogost, Ian. *How To Do Things With Videogames*. Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota Press, 2011. 180 pages. Paperback. (14 x 21.5).
Note: Fifth printing
6. Bogost, Ian. *How To Talk About Videogames*. Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota Press, 2015. 197 pages. Paperback. (14 x 21.5).
7. Bogost, Ian. *Persuasive Games: The Expressive Power of Video Games*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007. 450 pages. Hardcover with dust jacket. (18.25 x 23.5).
8. Buckwalter, Len. *Video Games*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1977. 158 pages. Paperback. (20.5 x 27).
Note: Oldest book in my collection.

9. Burnham, Van. *Supercade: A Visual History of the Videogame Age 1971-1984*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2001. 439 pages. Hardcover in dust jacket. (26 x 26).
10. Cassell, Justine and Henry Jenkins (eds). *From Barbie to Mortal Kombat: Gender and Computer Games*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998. 360 pages. Hardcover with dust jacket. (18.5 x 23.5).
11. Cohen, Scott. *Zap: The Rise and Fall of Atari*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1984. 177 pages. Hardcover in dust jacket. (14.5 x 21.75).
Note: Fourth Printing
12. Dewinter, Jennifer. *Influential Video Game Designers: Shigeru Miyamoto*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2015. 184 pages. Paperback. (14 x 21.5).
13. Dillon, Roberto. *The Golden Age of Video Games*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2011. 183 pages. Paperback. (15.5 x 23).
14. Donavan, Tristan. *Replay: The History of Video Games*. East Sussex: Yellow Ant, 2010. 501 pages. Paperback. (15.5 x 23).
15. Edery David and Ethan Mollick. *Changing the Game: How Video Games are Transforming the Future of Business*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: FT Press, 2009. 218 pages. Paperback. (15.25 x 24).
16. Eddy, Brian R. *Classic Video Games: The Golden Age, 1971-1984*. Oxford: Shire Publications, 2012. 56 pages. Paperback. (15 x 21).
17. Error, Hanenashi. Trans. Kurt Kalata. *Retro Game Super Translation Selection: 101 Interesting Text Localizations for Japanese and English Video Games*. Middletown, DE: [s.n.], 2017. 114 pages. Paperback. (18 x 25.25).
18. Ervin, Andrew. *Bit by Bit: How Video Games Transformed Our World*. New York: Basic Books, 2017. 290 pages. Hardcover in dust jacket. (14.5 x 21.5).
19. Flanagan, Mary. *Critical Play: Radical Game Design*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2013. 353 pages. Paperback. (17.75 x 22.5).
20. Flanagan, Mary and Helen Nissenbaum. *Values at Play in Digital Games*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2014. 207 pages. Hardcover in dust jacket. (15.75 x 23.5).

21. Gee, James Paul. *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007. 249 pages. Paperback. (15.5 x 23.5).
Note: Tenth printing
22. Gorges, Florent. Trans. Raphael Mourlanne. *The History of Nintendo: 1889-1980: From Playing-cards to Game & Watch: Volume 1*. France: Pix'n Love Publishing, 2010. 241 pages. Paperback with protective cover as issued. (15 x 21).
23. Gorges, Florent. Trans. Benjamin Daniel. *The History of Nintendo: 1980-1991: The Game & Watch Games, an Amazing Invention: Volume 2*. [France]: Pix'n Love Publishing, 2012. 194 pages. Paperback with protective cover as issued. (15 x 21).
24. Goldberg, Daniel and Linus Larsson (eds). *The State of Play: Creators and Critics on Video Game Culture*. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2015. 256 pages. Hardcover. (14 x 18.5).
25. Goldberg, Harold. *All Your Base Are Belong To Us: How Fifty Years of Videogames Conquered Pop Culture*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2011. 327 Pages. Paperback. (13.25 x 20).
Note: Fourth Printing
26. Graham, Ian. *Usborne Guide to Computer and Video Games: How They Work and How to Win*. Tulsa: Hayes Books, 1982. 48 pages. Paperback. (17 x 24).
27. Guins, Raiford. *Game After: A Cultural Study of Video Game Afterlife*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2014. 355 pages. Hardcover in dust jacket. (18.5 x 23.5).
28. Harrigan, Pat and Matthew G. Kirschenbaum (eds). *Zones of Control: Perspectives on Wargaming*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2016. 806 pages. Hardcover. (20.75 x 23.5).
29. Harris, Blake J. *Console Wars: Sega, Nintendo, and the Battle That Defined a Generation*. New York: Harper Collins, 2014. 558 pages. Hardcover in dust jacket. (16 x 23.5).
30. Hennessy, Jonathan. Art by Jack McGowan. *The Comic Book Story of Video Games and the Incredible History of the Electronic Gaming Revolution*. California/New York: Ten Speed Press, 2017. 185 pages. Paperback. (17.75 x 25.25).

31. Herman, Leonard. *Phoenix: The Fall & Rise of Video Games*. Springfield, NJ: Rolenta Press, 2001. 324 numbered pages plus 5 appendices and index. Paperback. (21 x 27.25).
Note: Third edition
32. Herz, J. C. *Joystick Nation: How Videogames Ate Our Quarters, Won Our Hearts, and Rewired Our Minds*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1997. 230 pages. Hardcover in dust jacket. (16 x 24).
33. Hirschfeld, Tom. *How to Master The Video Games*. Toronto: Bantam, 1981. 177 pages. Paperback. (10.5 x 17.5).
34. Hirschfeld, Tom. *How to Master Home Video Games*. New York: Bantam, 1982. 197 pages. Paperback. (10.5 x 17.5).
35. Jin, Dal Yong. *Korea's Online Gaming Empire*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2010. 195 pages. Hardcover in dust jacket. (15.75 x 23.5).
36. Juul, Jesper. *A Casual Revolution: Reinventing Video Games and Their Players*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2010. 252 pages. Hardcover in dust jacket. (15.5 x 23.25).
37. Juul, Jesper. *The Art of Failure: An Essay on the Pain of Playing Video Games*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2013. 156 pages. Paperback. (12.5 x 19.5).
Note: Second printing
38. Kent, Steven L. *The Ultimate History of Video Games: From Pong to Pokémon and Beyond...The Story Behind the Craze that Touched Our Lives and Changed the World*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2001. 608 pages. Paperback. (18.75 x 23).
Note: 12th printing
39. Kent, Steven L. *The First Quarter: A 25-Year History of Video Games*. Bothell, Wa: BWD Press, 2000. 446 pages. Paperback. (15.25 x 23)
40. Kline, Stephen, et. al. *Digital Play: The Interaction of Technology, Culture, and Marketing*. Québec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003. 368 pages. Paperback. (15 x 22.5).
41. Kohler, Chris. *Power Up: How Japanese Video Games Gave the World an Extra Life*. Indianapolis: BradyGAMES, 2005. 302 pages. Paperback. (14 x 21).

42. Kushner, David. *Jacked: The Outlaw Story of Grand Theft Auto*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2012. 298 pages. Hardcover in dust jacket. (16.25 x 25.25).
43. Kushner, David. *Masters of Doom: How Two Guys Created an Empire and Transformed Pop Culture*. New York: Random House, 2004. 339 pages. Paperback. (13 x 20).
Note: First paperback edition, eleventh printing
44. Li, Roland. *Good Luck Have Fun: The Rise of eSports*. New York: Skyhorse, 2017. 255 pages. Paperback. (15 x 23).
45. Lowood, Henry and Raiford Guins (eds). *Debugging Game History: A Critical Lexicon*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2016. 443 pages. Hardcover in dust jacket. (18.5 x 23.5).
46. McGonigal, Jane. *Reality Is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World*. New York: Penguin, 2011. 396 pages. Paperback. (13.75 x 21.5).
Note: Thirteenth printing
47. Mechner, Jordan. *The Making of Prince of Persia: Journals 1985-1993*. Middletown, DE: [s.n.], 2015. 323 pages. Paperback. (13 x 20).
48. Melissinos, Chris and Patrick O'Rourke. *The Art of Video Games: From Pac-Man to Mass Effect*. New York: Welcome Books, 2012. 215 pages. Hardcover with dust jacket. (26.5 x 26).
Note: Third printing
49. Parkin, Simon. *Death by Video Game: Danger, Pleasure, and Obsession on the Virtual Frontline*. New York: Melville House, 2016. 254 pages. Hardcover in dust jacket. (15.5 x 22.25).
Note: Second American printing
50. Pettus, Sam. *Service Games: The Rise and Fall of Sega*. Middletown, DE: [s.n.], 2015. 472 pages. Paperback. (15 x 23).
51. Provenzo, Eugene F., Jr. *Video Kids: Making Sense of Nintendo*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991. 184 pages. Paperback. (13.5 x 20.75).
52. Quinn, Zoë. *Crash Override: How Gamergate (Nearly) Destroyed My Life, and How We Can Win the Fight Against Online Hate*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2017. 242 pages. Hardcover in dust jacket. (16 x 24).

53. Rodriguez, Hector, et. al. *Optic Gaming: The Making of eSports Champions*. New York: HarperCollins, 2016. 262 pages. Paperback. (15 x 22.5).
Note: Third printing
54. Ryan, Jeff. *Super Mario: How Nintendo Conquered America*. New York: Penguin, 2012. 308 pages. Paperback. (13.75 x 21.5).
55. Sanglard, Fabien. *Game Engine Black Book: Wolfenstein 3D*. Middletown, DE: [s.n.], 2017. 311 pages. Paperback. (19 x 23.5).
56. Schreier, Jason. *Blood, Sweat, and Pixels: The Triumphant, Turbulent Stories Behind How Video Games Are Made*. New York: HarperCollins, 2017. 278 pages. Paperback. (13.5 x 20).
57. ScrewAttack. *Video Game Vault: The Best of Nintendo 64*. [s.l.]: Mango Media, 2016. 174 pages. Paperback. (12.75 x 20).
58. Sellers, John. *Arcade Fever: The Fan's Guide to the Golden Age of Video Games*. Philadelphia: Running Press, 2001. 159 pages. Paperback. (20.5 x 22.75).
Note: Second printing
59. Shaw, Adrienne. *Gaming at the Edge: Sexuality and Gender at the Margins of Gamer Culture*. Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota Press, 2014. 317 pages. Paperback. (14 x 21.5).
Note: Second printing
60. Sheff, David. *Game Over: Press Start to Continue: The Maturing of Mario*. Wilton, CT: CyberActive Media Group, 1999. 494 pages. Paperback. (13 x 20).
Note: Subtitle on full title page: *How Nintendo Conquered the World*.
61. Sheff David. *Game Over: How Nintendo Zapped an American Industry, Captured Your Dollars, and Enslaved Your Children*. New York, Random House, 1993. 445 pages. Hardcover in dust jacket. (16.5 x 24).
Note: This is a second edition of Entry No. 60, with a new publisher.

62. Sheff, David. *Game Over: How Nintendo Conquered the World*. New York: Vintage Books, 1994. 451 pages. Paperback. (13 x 20).
Note: This is a third edition of Entry No. 60, with a new publisher and a new afterword by the author. Paperback.
63. Stanton, Richard. *A Brief History of Video Games: The Evolution of a Global Industry*. Philadelphia: Running Press, 2015. 368 pages. Paperback. (14 x 19.5).
64. Sudnow, David. *Pilgrim in the Micro-World: Eye, Mind, and the Essence of Video Skill*. New York: Warner Books, 1983. 227 pages. Hardcover with dust jacket. (14.75 x 21.5).
65. Sullivan, George. *Screen Play: The Story of Video Games*. [s.l.]: Hilltop Books, [1983]. 88 pages. Paperback. (17.75 x 22.75).
Note: Ex-library book, title page torn out
66. Takahashi, Dean. *Opening the Box: Inside Microsoft's Plan to Unleash an Entertainment Revolution*. Roseville, CA: Prima Publishing, 2002. 370 pages. Hardcover with dust jacket. (16 x 23.5).
67. Takahashi, Dean. *The Xbox 360 Uncloaked: The Real Story Behind Microsoft's Next-Generation Video Game Console*. [s.l.]: SpiderWorks, 2006. 404 pages. Paperback. (15.25 x 22.75).
Note: Signed by author
68. Toppo, Greg. *The Game Believes in You: How Digital Play Can Make Our Kids Smarter*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015. 252 pages. Hardcover in dust jacket. (16 x 24).
69. Unseen64 Collective. *Video Games You Will Never Play*. Middletown, DE: [s.n.], 2016. 480 pages. Paperback. (17.75 x 25.5).
70. Watters, Chris. *The Gamer's Bucket List: The 50 Video Games to Play Before You Die*. [nl]: Mango Media, 2016. 139 pages. Paperback. (15.25 x 23.75).
71. Weiss, Brett. *The 100 Greatest Console Video Games 1977-1987*. Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing, Ltd., 2014. 240 pages. Hardcover. (18.5 x 26).
72. Williams, Walt. *Significant Zero: Heroes, Villains, and The Fight for Art and Soul in Video Games*. New York: Atria Books, 2017. 290 pages. Hardcover in dust jacket. (15.75 x 23.5).

73. Wolf, Mark J.P. (ed). *Before the Crash: Early Video Game History*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2012. 255 pages. Paperback. (15.25 x 22.75).
74. Wolf, Mark J.P. and Bernard Perron (eds). *The Video Game Theory Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2003. 343 pages. Paperback. (15.25 x 24).
Note: Sixth printing

III. List of Items to Add to the Collection

There are several titles from the early period of the video game industry that I hope to acquire in the future. In some cases, I have been unable to find copies of the books for sale online. (I have “wants” entered for these titles on AbeBooks and will receive an email if they ever become available.) In other instances, the titles are available for sale but the price currently exceeds my budget. Examples of early titles I would like to acquire include:

1. Albin, Len. *Secrets of the Video Game Super Stars*. New York: Morrow/Avon, 1982.
2. Deckles, Jon C. *Video Game Quest: The Complete Guide to Home Video Game Systems, Video Games, and Accessories*. [s.l.]: DMS, 1990.
3. Editors of the Consumer Guide. *The Complete Book of Video Games: From Best Buys to Best Strategies - All You Need to Know About Games You Can Play On Your TV Screen*. New York, NY: Warner Books, 1977.
4. Kush N’Stuff Amusement Electronics. *Video Game Logic*. Campbell, CA: The Company, 1976.

My want list also includes some readily available contemporary titles that are cost prohibitive for me at this time. Titles in this category include:

5. Perron, Bernard. *The World of Scary Video Games: A Study in Videoludic Horror*. [nl]: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018.

6. Blanchard, Johnny. *Gaming in the Obscure: Hidden Gems, Failed Hopes and Buried Mistakes*. [s.l.]: Roguegunners Production, 2019.

Finally, my want list includes some titles that are currently in production and that I look forward to acquiring upon their publication, including:

7. Ross Hamilton's *The Complete Book of Mario: The Ultimate Guide to Gaming's Most Iconic Character*.

8. Jason Schreier's *Press Reset: Ruin and Recovery in the Video Game Industry*.

9. and 10. Volumes 3 and 4 of Florent Gorges' four-volume series *The History of Nintendo*, which was originally published in French. I currently have the first two volumes (Items 22 and 23 on bibliography) as they are the only ones that have been translated into English. I hope to acquire the final two volumes when they are translated.