The preservation of digital games as Dutch cultural heritage

René Glas en Jasper van Vught (University of Utrecht)
Panel: Video games als cultureel erfgoed
“A panel of experts, politicians, and game developers discuss the value of preserving games, the role of various institutions in it, their ambitions and capabilities, and certain technological challenges.”
Beeld en Geluid: Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision

“Enriching the collection policy by expanding it to include videoart, interactive productions, games and virtual reality.”
The research project sets up the first unified effort between game research, cultural heritage institutions and the Dutch game industry to define, preserve, archive and exhibit the history of Dutch digital games and game development.
Urgency:

- deterioration of software carriers;
- obsolescence of software;
- ‘game industry as perpetual innovation economy’ (Kline et al. 2003).
The project: Questions of definition

• How can we define and approach the Dutch history of digital games?

• What defines a digital game or game-related cultural artifact/practice as Dutch cultural heritage?

• Does a digital game need to be of Dutch origin (and, if so, what would that entail) and what is the relationship between professional and amateur productions and practices?
The project: Questions of inclusion

- What should a preservation effort of Dutch digital game heritage include (game software, game hardware, game development materials, gaming press, amateur game productions and other game culture practices, etc.)?
- In what relative degree of importance should these elements be preserved?
What does the selection policy look like to preserve and archive such material within a national cultural heritage context (socio-cultural impact, artistic merit, innovative impact, etc.) but also within the limitations of an existing archival institution (space, budget, legal issues)?
The project: Questions of presentation

• How can digital game heritage be opened up, to both the general public and to specialist groups (researchers, game industry, press)?
• This includes both archive access (through emulation) and exhibition curation (at Beeld and Geluid or other venues).
Outcomes

- Expert meeting Beeld en Geluid (February)
- NWO financing museumresearch: GAME ON. Archivering en presentatie van computergames.
- Integration in BA and MA courses: e.g. BAEW course dedicated to game history and preservation
Expected Outputs

• White paper on Game Preservation
• Archiving Protocol and Selection Criteria for digital games – selection matrix
• Historical games in Beeld en Geluid collection
• Research assistant project on early Dutch game history
Collaboration aims

- European Federation of Game Archives, Museums and Preservation Projects (EFGAMP).
- NWO KIEM project Archiving Interactive Media (AIM), University of Amsterdam.
- Nationale Strategie Digitaal Erfgoed (see: Netwerk Digitaal Erfgoed 2015)
- Dutch Game Garden and Dutch Game Association (access to current and past game developers)
- Control (collaboration for publishing industry-oriented research results)
Thank you!