All the latest information about the Museum Of Gaming project!

The Museum Of Gaming

Newsletter

Issue number 2 – February 2015

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Museum Update

It’s been three months since the Museum Of Gaming project was officially announced and we have already received a lot of positive feedback. We’ve have over 600 twitter followers, an active facebook group and a constantly expanding archive.

We have received a couple of donations since the last news letter so I’d like to thank; Neil Forshaw for his Wizard’s Quest and Christine Robinson for her hand cut jigsaw. You can see both of these items in the “Archive News” below.

I am more than happy to hear from anyone reading the museum or this newsletter so please do send your suggestions, requests, and ideas about the project to the email address below.

Phil Robinson
Director & Curator
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Snakes & Ladders History

One of the most famous and instantly recognisable board games is the childhood favourite Snakes & Ladders. Like many games we know so well Snakes and Ladders has an interesting history.

The game originated in Ancient India where it was known as “Moksha Patamu”. The original game was designed to embrace the Hindu philosophies of Karma (कर्म) a causality based on good or bad deeds, and Samskara (संस्कार) which are ritual life events.

In Moksha Patam the snakes led you down to asuras (असुर) which are power seeking demons while the ladders allowed you to climb up to either a god or a version of heaven such as Kailasa, Vaikuntha, and Brahmaloka. The game is one of pure luck with no real skill or strategy. This suits its philosophical background, as it emphasises the ideas of fate and destiny.

When the game was first published in England in 1892 the cultural and religious iconography was removed and replaced with more traditional British scenes reflecting Christian virtues and morals, each snake or ladder linking causes to effects.

One of the museum’s early Snakes & Ladders boards, from 1910

One of the museum's early Snakes & Ladders boards, from 1910
**Snakes & ladders**

**Box & Board Art**

We have several Snakes and Ladders boards in the museum’s collection and some have great early colour artwork. To the left is the board label from the 1910 Edition shown above. To give the product an exotic feel the label reads “The Oriental Pastime Of Snakes & Ladders, The Latest Improved Edition”. This board is made in England but doesn’t give the maker’s name.

The edition pictured below was made by Spears Games Ltd. According to the box it was designed in England but manufactured in Bavaria, Germany.

Spears Games was run by a Jewish family and they moved their manufacturing to England in 1932, partially to avoid import duty and partly to move away from Nazi Germany.

To give an exotic feel, the box cover art shows an Indian scene of a snake charmer playing for an English children. The board is another “morality” edition with virtues printed at the base of ladders and vices printed at the tops of snakes.

This version from Spears Games alludes to its Indian origins. (The board is to the right)

The board on the left is an interesting edition, is a wider tri-fold board produced in Bavaria, Germany by Spears Games.

This one doesn’t count to 100 like most Snakes and Ladders boards but to 130, it also doesn’t contain any of the morality squares but instead focuses on entertainment with a circus clown theme.

Usually a balance is created between the number of snakes and ladders, even taking the number of squares traversed into account. Perhaps most unusual on this board is that it has ladders but no snakes. Here you can still be sent back but you can go down a ladder if the image depicts this.
With so many items and such limited space I’ve been spending a lot of time recently just putting things in boxes. There is still a lot to do before the archive is fully functional. Every item needs labelling with its museum number, needs a full database entry and needs to be photographed properly. There are now thousands of items and only about 200 of them are even in the database. Here are some of the interesting items going into the archive since the last newsletter.

In 1997 I was working at Psygnosis on a game called Overboard (known as Shipwreckers in the USA) for the original SONY Playstation. Whilst adding Playstation games to the archive I found this tucked inside the disc box. An invite for the Overboard launch party. It’s great when surprises turn up!

Finally, here are a couple of items kindly donated to the museum. First is a fantasy adventure game called Wizard’s Quest by Avalon Hill. Second is this great hand cut jigsaw with art work by H.M. Brock from 1935.

Tiddley Winks (also Tiddly Winks) was a very popular children’s parlour game. The box above has a bakelite cup set in the centre of a target to aim for whilst the box below contained two turned wooden cups. Tiddley Winks was invented by "Joseph Assheton Fincher" and he filed a patent for it in 1888, there is no evidence of it existing before this date.

The game usually comes with big discs for launching which are called “squidgers” and smaller (tiddley) discs are called “winks”!

Quintro, or 5 in a row was released by Spears Games in 1929, it’s almost a direct copy of Peg'ity by Parker Brothers released in 1925.

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Wizard’s Quest 1979

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Acquisition News

Cluedo First Edition (1949)

Cluedo is the most famous of all murder mystery games but tracking down a first edition is more difficult than you might think.

Waddingtons bought the Cluedo patent from a man called Anthony Pratt in 1947, however the game wasn’t released until 1949 due to post-war Britain being quite short on resources. The second world war had left British manufacturing in a poor state and for many years Waddingtons and all other board game manufacturers made austerity editions of their board games. These editions had no metal parts and sometimes used a spinner instead of dice.

Cluedo was expected to be a success, but it was so incredibly popular straight away that the first print run was very short lived. As a result, very slight design changes were made as the company ran out of the original materials. This means that there are many first editions but many are not from the original first print run.

There are several clues to identify which edition a Cluedo set is. To begin with all first editions have a red finger print on the box label, the board label, and the backs of all the cards.

Next is the box itself, the first print run used black backing for both the board and the box, as materials ran low subsequent print runs used a much lighter backing material.

Finally there are the weapons, the candle stick, dagger and spanner from the first print run were very brittle and easily broken so in later first editions they were made of a different metal. The candlestick in the first print run was long and had four distinct sections however this was shortened to just three main sections in later editions to give it extra strength.

Finding a true first edition, first print run Cluedo is not that easy but it was a very popular game so they are out there!

About MOG:

The Museum Of Gaming project is being developed to chart the history of gaming through its significant advances and to research the fundamental processes of gaming and its functions.

We are currently putting together paperwork to open the museum as a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO) and to ensure that the museum is developed with clear goals.

Director & Curator
Phil Robinson
Founder, currently studying an MSc in Museum Studies at the University of Leicester.

Trustee for local business
Jake Smith
Director at JP74

Trustee for Higher / Further Education
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MUSEUM INFORMATION

Website:
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