News from Nan

NEWS 'N' VIEWS

COMPUTER GAMES FROM THE PAST

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Adventure Game Diskette

Anna and I have been working on a project at the Computer History Museum for the last year and a half to preserve and catalog text and software artifacts. Along the way we have seen many diskettes being added to the museum's collection.

Some of the diskettes contain computer games from the past that were once very popular.

Colossal Cave Adventure

Above you can see a diskette for a later, Microsoft-branded version of "Adventure." The original version of the game was called *Colossal Cave Adventure,* written in Fortran in 1975 for the PDP-10 computer by Will Crowther (programmer, caver, and rock climber). It was a text-only game that led the player on a treasure hunt to solve a riddle that only became known as you played the game. It had no graphics or sound, and yet it was once extremely popular.

I first encountered the game when it appeared at SLAC (Stanford Linear Accelerator), where I worked in the early 1970s. That Adventure game was an ORVYL program running on the SLAC IBM 370/168.

Once the game appeared, it was played online by dozens of people every day, all trying to solve the riddles in the game. Hints about how to "win" the game were being passed from person to person all over the lab in the hallways and at lunch, and copies of the game were hidden in disk files in many places on the machine. The madness went on for several months and also infected the sons and daughters of the SLAC employees, including our own.

Castle Wolfenstein

Castle Wolfenstein game diskette

Castle Wolfenstein was a shooting game that was very popular with the kids in our Cupertino neighborhood in the early 1980's. It employed basic graphics and sound. In the game the player moved through the rooms of a castle and fought gun battles with enemy soldiers hidden in various places.

Pie Man

Pie Man game diskette

The Pie Man game was published in 1982. I never saw this game being played, but the diskette image above shows that one of the authors was Eagle Berns. I worked with Bob "Eagle" Berns at Stanford briefly in the 1970s. Eagle was a very creative software developer.

Through the Looking Glass

Through the Looking Glass diskette

Through the Looking Glass, released in 1984, was one of the first games written for the Mac. It was the only game published directly by Apple Computer. The game was written by Steve Capps, one of the designers of the original Apple Macintosh computer.

❮ 2020   ❮ ADVENTURE COMPUTER GAME   ❮ BOB "EAGLE" BERNS   ❮ CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN COMPUTER GAME

❮ COLOSSAL CAVE ADVENTURE COMPUTER GAME   ❮ COMPUTER HISTORY MUSEUM   ❮ PIE MAN COMPUTER GAME

❮ STEVE CAPPS   ❮ THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS COMPUTER GAME