Selection for Emulation Criteria

Learning Games Research Initiative Archive (LGIRA)

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LGIRA has many thousands of software titles that are effectively stranded because the hardware environments they depend on are difficult to source. Within LGIRA, of course, this is not the case; we have prioritized over the years the acquisition of all necessary hardware needed to make any software (i.e., games) in the collection usable. There are a growing number of instances, however, in which it is insufficient—from a research standpoint—to accept such a limited frame of access for LGIRA's materials. It is entirely likely, for instance, that researchers in the future will want to be able to run games designed for the Dendy system, which was a massively popular hardware clone of Nintendo's Famicom sold in the Soviet Union and Russia. In order to understand the history of Soviet-era game culture, game scholars in the future will need a way to easily play the titles made popular on the Dendy, some of which are simply bootlegged versions of Nintendo titles, while others are original and emerged out of homebrew clubs located throughout Eastern Europe.

Because the process of emulating games can be quite time-consuming—even if an emulator already exists, it can still require considerable effort to identify the settings necessary for the game to run correctly—LGIRA uses the following prompts to help leadership determine emulation priorities:

Due Diligence Check

1. Has the software been emulated already?

Risks

2. Will emulation generate IP/legal issues that LGIRA will have to address?

Scope of Work

3. Does an emulator already exist?

4. How soon is the emulation needed?

5. How many titles need emulating?

Impact

6. How likely will an emulated title be repeatedly requested?

7. Are there ongoing research projects concerned with the prospective title that might benefit from emulation?

Capacity

8. Does LGIRA currently have the resources needed to develop, store, and (if legal) distribute the emulation?

The answers to these prompts help LGIRA's leadership team make informed decisions about when and how to pursue an emulation project. In general, LGIRA would like to emulate all software that becomes part of the collection. Practically speaking, however, the organization's limited resources—and its desire to steer clear of legal and/or bureaucratic impediments—determines, to a great degree, which emulation projects we are reasonably able to pursue.