



Preserving Games: the Importance of Legal Deposit

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Hello.

I'm David Benoist, one of the curators of the Multimedia service, here at the library

Thank you again for coming to this edition of Indiecade Europe.

We're delighted to be hosting for the first time.

I have some good news and some bad news:

- The good news is this is the last presentation of the morning and it will be short (because you must be hungry)
- The bad news is that my colleague Nicolas, who speaks fluent English, is not here, so it is up to me to present the legal deposit system.

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- **The BnF and legal deposit**
- **The video games collection**
- **Conservation, digitization and emulation**
- **What for?**

These are the few points I would like to address.

I will briefly explain how legal deposit has enabled the library to build a remarkable collection of video games.

What exactly this collection comprises. How to consult it,

And how it can help you in your research or professional activities.

We'll have some time at the end of my talk if you have any questions.



The National Library comes from the personal libraries of the kings of France, dating back to the Middle Ages.

It became the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF) in 1994.

Some of its services were installed in this new building at that time.

The BnF has four main missions, with regard to the documents created in France:

- To collect
- To describe
- To preserve
- To communicate these documents

And my presentation will deal with each of these points.



To collect.

All this is made possible by the legal deposit system.

Initially it was a law of 1537 made by King Francis I to monitor what was published in his country.

Since then, each publisher must deposit with the library a copy of what they sell in France.

Such a system exists in many other countries, but in France it was extended to sound recordings, movies and in 1992 to multimedia documents.

Which includes video games (on physical media or dematerialized since 2006)

So if you sell a video game in France, you must deposit two copies here. Even if it's not a French production.

This deposit is required to obtain a grant from the CNC (national center for cinema and moving images).

We don't make selections, everything must be deposited, big or small games, good or bad ones.

It is mandatory and free, and we can help you if you don't have the time or don't know how to do it alone.



Since 1992 several publishers got used to sending their games to the BnF.

We also have colleagues, called prospectors, whose job it is to track down games which have not been deposited.

We also accept donations.

Twelve years ago, I myself gave my first Personal Computer to the library, and a bunch of Star Trek videotapes, but that's another story.

So if you want to get rid of your old collection of video games, please contact us.



But as you can imagine, there are several limitations to this legal deposit system, and to the preservation of video games in the library

We still have issues with :

- DRMs
- Dematerialized games
- Games as a service
- Games that require internet connection
- Streaming games
- Games on phones
- MMOs

It's also difficult for us to get independent games: because creators are not always aware of the legal deposit, or think it's not free, or don't have time.

Hence the importance of my presentation to you today.



There is an online interface on the BnF website that explains how to easily submit your creations.

Today there is a workshop, at 2 pm (in salle des commissions n°1) where we will help you deposit your games.

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Each year we also have a budget to buy items :

- old video games produced before 1992.
- or foreign video games, sometimes never sold in France, but interesting for research.

Famous Japanese games, for example.

BnF	17,000 games
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BnF	17,000 games
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In our collection, we now have more than seventeen thousand different games.

Amounting to

- Thirty five thousand items on various media
 - Including floppy discs (Amiga, Atari...)
 - Cartridges
 - Optical discs (PC games, or recent game consoles)

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We also have accessories sold with games: skateboards, guitars, bicycles, ...

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Skylanders, Amiibo, Disney Infinity, etc.

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And all the collector editions, more or less impressive.



In addition to the legal deposit, we have also gathered over time the machines for reading sound and audiovisual documents.

It started with some of the earliest models in the nineteenth century.
And more recently with gaming machines.

This is the Charles Cros collection, in one of the towers.

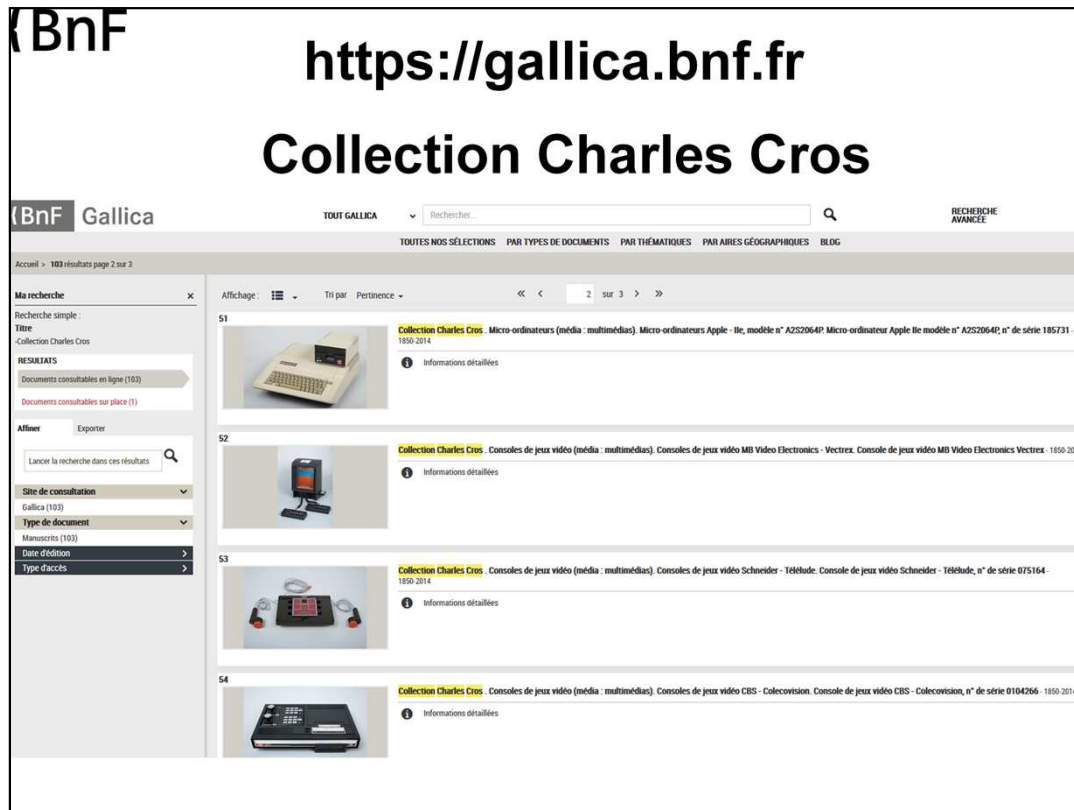


We have a number of old pieces of equipment.

Because in 1992, when legal deposit became mandatory for games, there had already been 4 generations of consoles.

So if we buy old games, we have to buy old machines.

For example, we have a copy of the first game console sold in France in 1974, the Magnavox Odyssey.



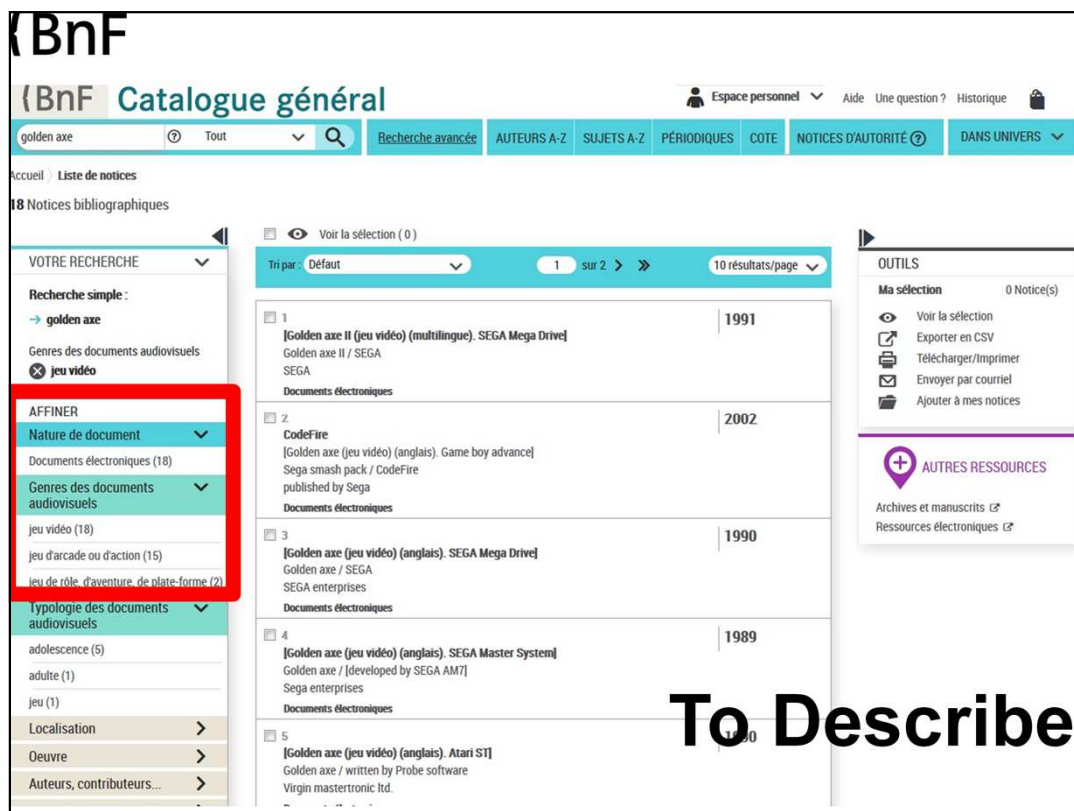
You can find a selection of these items online in Gallica, the BnF's digital library.



Speaking of Gallica, there are many ressources in our digital library: drawings, photographs, texts, books...

So do not hesitate to navigate through all these contents.

There are 5 millions documents in Gallica, and we can help you to use them for your creations.



As I said before, the second part of the library's missions is to describe documents.

The BnF publishes the French National Bibliography:

It is an official publication that lists the documents published in France and received under legal deposit.

You can find games in the general catalogue of the library, in the same way as books.

You only have to choose "video games" in document type to filter the results.

But you won't necessarily find everything, because the first video games we received were not identified as such.

So there are still a few more refinements to be made to this catalogue.



To preserve

In our store rooms, games are often stored in DVD boxes.

Sometimes in custom made boxes for collector editions or accessories.

But these physical media can degrade over time, as can the machines that read them.

That is why documents are mainly digitized, when we can.

Which is also useful to facilitate their communication.

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Emulation

Qemu, Dosbox, VM Ware,
Virtualbox, Sheepshaver/Basilisk,
AppleWin, WinUAE/fs-uae,
FunzyTO7/BnFTOWin, WinApe,
WinVice, Hoxs64, Boycott
Advance, Desmume, DuoS
DSEMU, iDeaS, no\$gba, Zsnes,
Snes9x, Project64, 1964,
EuphOric, ...

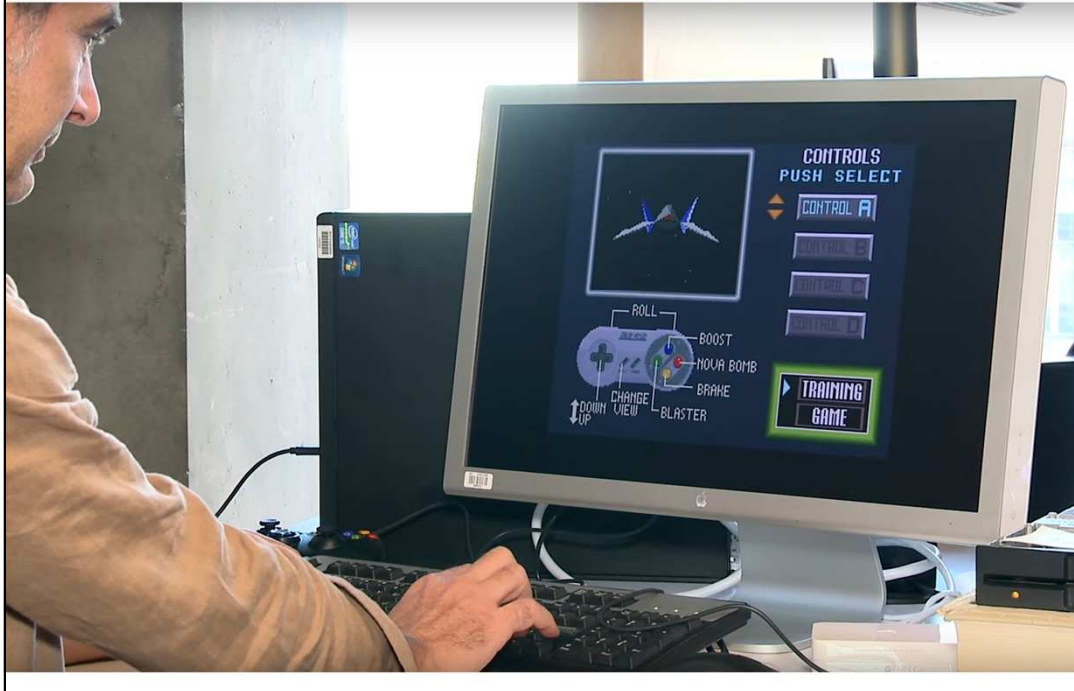
I'm not a technology specialist, so I won't attempt to go into detail about the emulation process.

I'm sure a lot of you know much more about it than I do.

I only wanted to show you that we use a large range of emulators, developed by passionate communities.

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Emulation



And thanks to this you can play old video games on modern PCs in the library.

Here, you can see my colleague Jean-Philippe Humblot, who is our emulation specialist.

And you can talk with him today if you want more information about this process.



To communicate.

If you remember correctly, the library's 4th mission is to communicate the documents.

The communication of the games is done exclusively on site, in our rooms.

Room A is open to all audiences, with
5 types of consoles (Switch, Wii U, PS3, PS4 and a Super NES Mini)
3 PCs,
With a total selection of a hundred games
including some of the games that won awards during Indiecade 2018

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To Communicate

© Bibliothèque nationale de France, Dominique Perrault, architecte, ADAGP Paris 2019

A giant screen for multi-player games on Wii U (Smash Bros, Mario Kart and Super Mario)



An oculus rift, with videos and 2 games : Beat Saber and Super Hot.

These rooms are accessible to all people over 16, and access is free after 5pm.

There is another room with more games for children.

Room A is freely opened for everyone during the festival, and my colleagues can take you there, on the other side of the library.

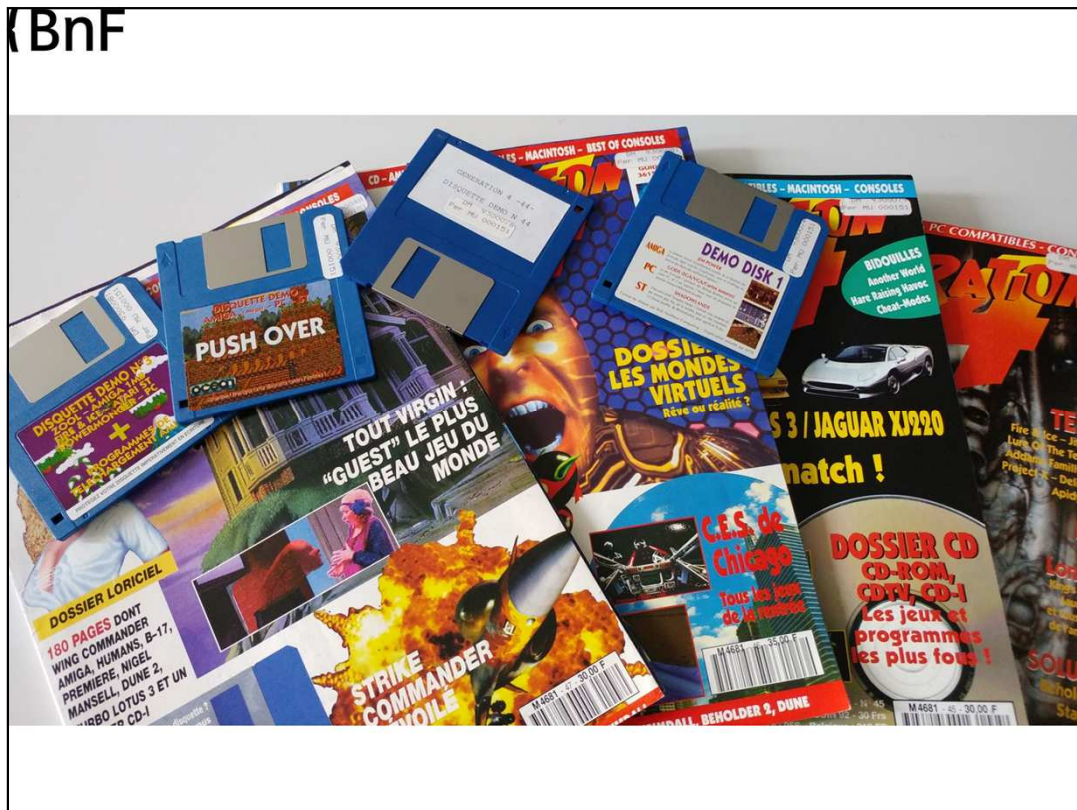


And a room for researchers, with access to the entire collection.

The possibility to play on the original machines (if emulation is not available or if the researcher has special needs).

We estimate that around 50% of the game collection can be accessed on the day of request.

But of course the games cannot be viewed outside the library, or taken or copied. You do not have to worry about the creations you entrust to us.

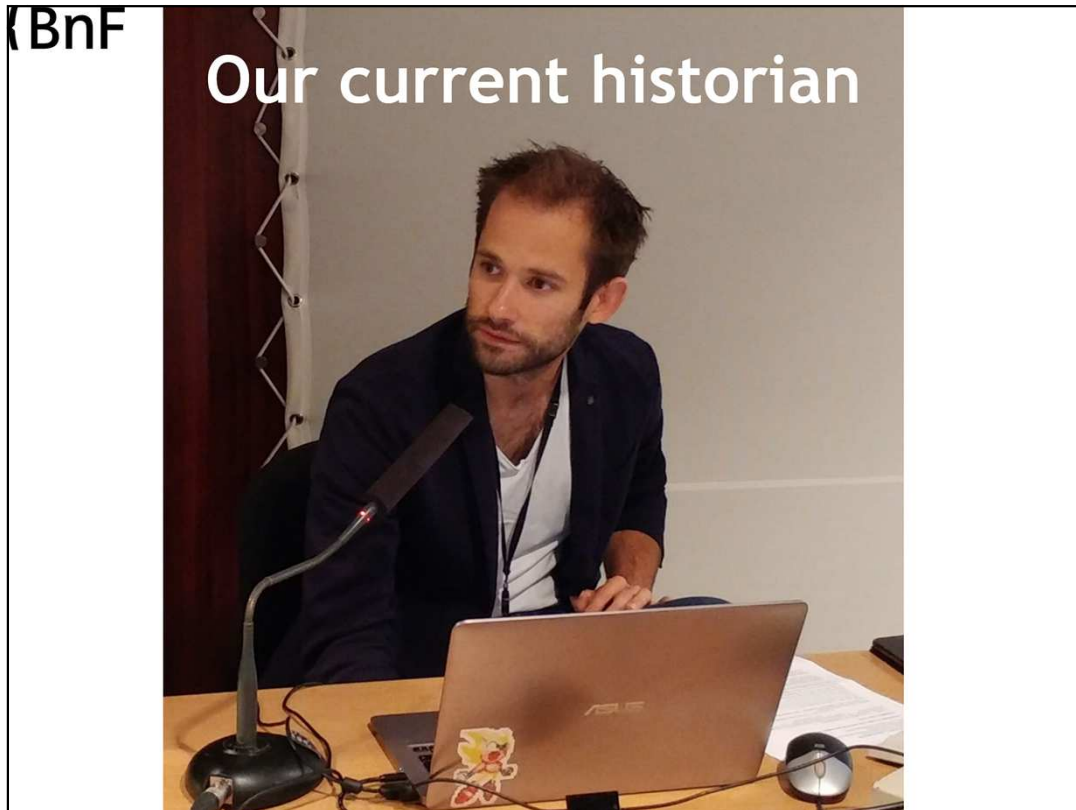


And the interest of coming to the library is that you also have access to all the books and journals that have been published in connection with video games.

As we also receive the legal deposit of books and journals.

And we save links to gaming archives, showing videos of gaming sessions.

To offer value in addition to the games themselves.



Who is the audience that comes to consult our research collection?

There are students, journalists, researchers.

Are there any in the room? Journalists ? Academics ?

As you know, there are more and more academics who have research topics related to video games.

Research in all fields: history, sociology, narration, arts, etc.

We are even fortunate to have associate researchers, who can work for several years on our collections in privileged conditions.

This is Romain Vincent, our current associate researcher, who is a history teacher and is writing a thesis on how teachers can use video games.



We regularly organize events with researchers: for example, video game meetings,

Researchers play a game and comment it live.

It takes place at the library and you can find these conferences afterwards on YouTube.

We also organize conservation seminars, book presentations.

And at Paris Games Week, there will be a “research day” with conferences, on November 1st.

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We also want our collection to be useful for creators and publishers.

Do YOU need to consult old games for your creations?

What games would you like to consult at the library?

What are your particular needs that you cannot solve on your own or with what can be found on the Internet?

Would it be interesting to retrieve working documents you produce?

We'd like to know more about your needs / requests.



We are here to help you today, to discuss all these questions.

Thank you for your attention.

And if you have any questions do not hesitate to ask them now.