

ARTICLE



‘Missing Presumed’: computer games and digital adventures in the Colin Smythe/Terry Pratchett Collection

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ABSTRACT

This essay explores the intersections between literature and new media through the lens of the *Discworld* computer games based on Sir Terry Pratchett’s novels. Although Pratchett was one of the twentieth century’s most successful authors in the English language, he has been largely absent from literary criticism, chiefly because he was and continues to be perceived as a popular author, a writer for the masses. The popularity of his *Discworld* series of novels led computer game developers to adapt them to new media in the 1980s and 1990s. The Colin Smythe/Terry Pratchett collection at Senate House Library, University of London, provides a treasure trove of information to understand this aspect of Pratchett’s vast literary and publishing output as a result of the survival of invaluable analogue peripheral records, visual and printed sources which document the creative process and Pratchett’s input. The essay argues that although these digital objects have been largely treated as physical objects and have been mostly retained for their artefactual and anecdotal value, the existence of analogue sources provides a unique opportunity to explore them in more detail, taking into account the historical, social and cultural context that enabled their creation to inform their future digital preservation.

KEYWORDS

Literary collections; born-digital archives; computer games; Sir Terry Pratchett; cultural history

Introduction

Sir Terry Pratchett (1948–2015) was one of the most prolific and successful writers of fantasy novels in the English language in recent decades and a phenomenon of popular modern literature. As well as selling millions of books worldwide,¹ his work was translated into over 30 different languages. Throughout his lifetime Pratchett received much official recognition. As well as being named Britain’s most read author in the 1990s, he was appointed an OBE for his services to literature in 1998 and was knighted in 2009, shortly after being diagnosed with Alzheimer disease.²

Despite his phenomenal popularity as a novelist,³ and a recent exhibition at the Salisbury Museum exploring his world and contribution to fantasy and science fiction,⁴ Pratchett is still to be the subject of in-depth research within the field of literary and cultural studies.⁵ Some of his contemporaries have defined his work as a re-imagination of our own world, and a humorous satire of our society and institutions, from the coming

of the railways to the internet, religious intolerance and radicalisation.⁶ Furthermore, Pratchett's most significant contribution to literature lies in his treatment of the science fiction and fantasy genres, particularly in the *Discworld* novels, which borrowed elements from myths and fairy tales, as well as from Shakespeare's plays and J. R. R. Tolkien's Middle Earth. His keen scientific eye, fascination with social, cultural and political history, and his interest in technological invention are ever-present in the entire series, which portrays a universe populated with fantastical creatures as well as humans.⁷

Although some critics have defined the *Discworld* novels as lacking the ambition and depth of serious literary fiction,⁸ Pratchett's supporters have praised his story-telling power, which draws from the tradition of great English humorists such as P.G. Wodehouse and Douglas Adams; and his powerful imagination, which makes the reader question received opinion, recognise our place in the world and the importance of human agency to take responsibility for our own lives.⁹ Conversely, the novels' appeal is reflected in their adaptation to a wide range of formats,¹⁰ and a large fan base with a strong online presence including websites, fan forums, blogs,¹¹ and social media platforms.¹²

This essay will explore the preservation of one of the most overlooked and yet intriguing aspects of Pratchett's work: the adaptation of some of the *Discworld* novels to computer and video gaming in the mid-1980s and 1990s through the prism of the Colin Smythe/Terry Pratchett Collection held at Senate House Library, one of the few and yet little-known collections relating to Pratchett available in a UK research library.¹³ While the adaptation of novels to computer and video games is not new and gaming is a hugely important part of contemporary entertainment culture, the preservation of these complex digital objects has not been afforded the same level of significance and attention as that devoted to established media such as books, archives and audiovisual materials.

What makes the Pratchett case so compelling though is that a great deal of the documentary evidence concerning the creative process including games scripts, correspondence with software developers, media reviews, as well as marketing and promotional materials has survived in a publisher's archive. This is significant from the perspective of digital preservation, as games history encompasses the published games as well as any archival documentation that places them in their right context and opens them up to serious attention; the kind of attention that researchers devote to histories of art or government. This documentation reveals the thought, planning, time, effort, inspiration and innovation that goes into the making of games. Furthermore, it supports preservation strategies that go beyond tackling content loss and technological obsolescence.¹⁴

Using the *Discworld* novels adaptations to computer gaming as a case study, this essay will seek to explore the intersections between the games as by-products of popular digital culture and Pratchett's own literary work. It will consider the risks associated with the passive curation of these born-digital assets in the context of a research library which is starting to take first steps in digital preservation. It will examine to what extent the analogue material held in the collection relating to the development of this digital media can inform long-term preservation and curation of these objects. Furthermore, it will reflect on the overlaps between the published versions of the fantasy novels and their virtual adaptation to computer games, and what they tell us about the reader's and player's interactions with the literary works and the digital objects. Finally, the essay will reflect upon how the author's involvement in the creative process contributes to our

understanding of digital publishing as an extension of Pratchett's printed output. These are significant issues in the context of the digital preservation of computer games, which necessitates a collaborative approach and a deeper understanding of the different elements and agents that contributed to their creation.

Managing and preserving born-digital objects in the Colin Smythe/Terry Pratchett Collection

The Colin Smythe/Terry Pratchett Collection is a hybrid and still growing body of analogue material and digital media amassed by Colin Smythe, who published Pratchett's early novels and became his literary agent in 1987.¹⁵ This substantial collection of circa 3,000 items was gifted to Senate House Library in 2002, with further accruals added in recent years. It consists of Pratchett's works, including all available editions, reprints and translations of his novels, short stories and journal articles. Of particular note is a copy of the first edition of *The Carpet People*, with the full-page illustrations hand-coloured by Pratchett. There are also texts of adaptations, audio and video recordings, journal articles featuring Pratchett, newsletters and fanzines, press cuttings, publicity material and spin-offs as diverse as maps, diaries, calendars, posters, jigsaws, bookplates, models, tee-shirts, and badges.¹⁶ Over 80 typescripts, mostly proofs of Pratchett's works, are also part of the collection.¹⁷

Among this rich body of print and archival material there are 45 computer and video game adaptations of some of Pratchett's early and very successful *Discworld* novel series, including *The Colour of Magic* which was released in 1986, and is generally considered the only game which was adapted from the novel and follows the plot of the book closely. Between 1995 and 1997 another three games were released: *Discworld* (1995), inspired by the *Guards!, Guards!* novel published in 1989; *Discworld II: Missing Presumed* (1996–1997), inspired by *Moving Pictures*, published in 1990 and *The Reaper Man*, published in 1991; and *Discworld Noir* (1999), which is not strictly based on the novels but takes inspiration from the satirical *Discworld* universe. These items include different versions of the computer and video games for a range of operating systems such as MS-DOS, Windows, Macintosh, PlayStation and Sega console. Additionally, there are several digital media including floppy disks, computer tape and CD-ROM. Some of these items are versions of the games released for non-English speaking countries including China, Spain, Portugal, Poland, Germany, Israel and Japan. In addition to the games, the Smythe/Pratchett collection includes analogue related material such as illustrations for graphic designs, game scripts, some correspondence with the developers, marketing and promotional materials, and manuals.

Upon their arrival at Senate House Library, the games were catalogued as published material following AACR2 descriptive rules, and were primarily retained as a complementary and peripheral element to the collection. Each catalogue entry provides a significant amount of metadata and allied information about the item. This approach to the description of computer and video games has been standard practice in most libraries and archives, given these formats present specific characteristics such as publication platforms, editions and expansions as well as titles and credits that require the flexibility provided by AACR2. In recent years, as best practice in the

field continues to evolve, Resource Description and Access (RDA) has emerged as the most appropriate descriptive standard for the cataloguing of these digital objects.¹⁸

The Library's cataloguers took a pragmatic approach to deal with these items, and regarded them as an extension of the printed literary output which was worth preserving for its peripheral rather than cultural or heritage value; in other words, a reflection of Pratchett's reach beyond the realm of computer games enthusiasts and fans of his novels. Furthermore, these items appear to have been treated as a complement to the main collection, rather than as a significant record of Pratchett's literary output.

Although in recent years Senate House Library has made efforts to proactively publicise the Smythe/Pratchett collection in connection with public engagement activities relating to vintage gaming and the Internet Archive,¹⁹ its research profile and use levels remain low. Furthermore, the games have never been publicly accessed in the reading room and preservation activity has primarily focused on cataloguing and description, and maintaining them in environmentally controlled storage. The current status quo poses intrinsic risks to the authenticity and integrity of these digital objects, and may lead to long-term loss and technological obsolescence. While these games may not be unique objects, they are an integral part of the collection. Therefore, if they deteriorate and become inaccessible, an important piece of contextual information about this large body of material and how it was assembled would be lost.

This passive and reactive approach to selection, curation and preservation used to be the norm in libraries and archives until not long ago, and chiefly owed to institutional perceptions about computer games being of ephemeral nature rather than sources of information which libraries and archives preserved.²⁰ As Paul Gooding and Melissa Terras have pointed out, computer games are extremely vulnerable digital objects, and in spite of being such an important part of modern popular culture, they need to be understood properly to implement effective preservation strategies. As well as the challenges of navigating intellectual property and copyright protection, the lack of sound documentation strategies presents a significant barrier to preserving this new media. Technological obsolescence and cultural perceptions have also had an impact on the preservation and curation of games.²¹

For the games industry, there has been little incentive in preserving their own heritage except for internal research, and the emphasis has been primarily on keeping high sales, defending the sector against piracy and aggressive patenting. The cultural and political perception of games and gaming has also influenced their long-term preservation. Like other new media previously such as film, music or graphic novels, computer games have often been perceived as a source of moral or social corruption, resulting in a deep mistrust of games and gaming.²²

As complex digital objects, the *Discworld* computer games consist of more than one type of component including numeric data, text, images, graphics, audio, video and executables. Another important issue to consider is multiple ownership of intellectual property rights across different national jurisdictions, digital rights management and the legal complications that arise from this given the involvement of script writers, software artists, game developers and marketing strategists in the creation of a single product. These intrinsic characteristics require an interdisciplinary approach to their long-term preservation, and the coordinated efforts of librarians, digital archivists, graphic designers, digital artists and software and hardware developers to share their

expertise and develop joint strategies to preserve the cultural and digital footprint that these computer games have generated.²³

There is a distinct opportunity at Senate House Library to explore the preservation and curation of these digital objects through the lens of the analogue material that has been preserved in the collection. This unique body of material offers invaluable historical, cultural and technological contextual information about the development, creation and marketing of the games, as well as Pratchett's own involvement in this process.

Scripts of the games and correspondence with the developers allow the researcher to explore the story-lines, and the different elements which contributed to the creation and development of the product. For instance, researchers will be able to find the master copy of the *Discworld* script,²⁴ and details of a treatment of the *Discworld II* game. The latter document provides a reasonably detailed outline of the story without going into the minute detail of the three hundred puzzles that were part of the game.²⁵ In addition, there is a file from one of the software company development managers containing 'look descriptions' of all items that can be placed in the inventory of a player.²⁶ Of particular interest is a collection of copies of the preliminary black and white sketches of the original characters, together with two leaves of text and prints of three full colour scenes from the game.²⁷

Furthermore, original illustrations and artwork, promotional and marketing materials, cheat guides, manuals, radio interviews with the author, public relations information, and reviews published in the media provide additional information to explore the cultural footprint of these objects and place them in the context of Pratchett's literary work.

Reimagining Pratchett's *Discworld* novels through computer games

Terry Pratchett undertook most of his writing on a series of inter-connected machines at home. One of his greatest fears was a power supply failure which would make him lose all his work, hence the abundance of computers in his office and his interest in hardware and technology. In a symbolic act, Pratchett instructed his executor to destroy his hard disk containing all his unfinished novels following his death.²⁸

These anecdotal facts are important to understand the creation of the *Discworld* games and Pratchett's contribution to that endeavour. The games were widely praised in the media for being accurate adaptations of works of fiction with the characters behaving in the way readers of the books would expect.²⁹ However, while Pratchett had an interest in gaming, he was concerned whether the *Discworld* games conformed to the spirit of his novels.³⁰ It has been argued that Pratchett's most prominent connection with games was his own influence on PC gaming as a whole throughout the 1990s, from the people who made them to those who played them. The *Discworld* novels had a significant influence on most comedy-based fantasy games of this period, as can be ascertained from many gaming forums and fantasy Massively Multiplayer Online (MMO) games, where avatars are named after the characters in his novels.³¹

Pratchett maintained a close contact with the game developers. His main role in the creative process was to ensure they interpreted the characters or the plots of his novels accurately:

My job was to shout and scream at the writer and programmers to make sure they had everything right. I had to keep them all in order. If I know in my head, a character appears tall and thin – then – I’d have to shout at them if they come with the character as being someone short and fat.³²

Further evidence of this close contact between author and game developers appears in a covering note attached to the typescript storyline for *Discworld II*, which Gregg Barnett, from Teeny Weeny Games, sent to Pratchett explaining the rationale behind the game:

Obviously there are things to be learned from reactions to the first game. Big strengths were storyline and puzzle depth (usually neglected in adventure games). This is still my focus, but we can now loosen up a little and add more cinematic sequences to establish story as well as rewards for more puzzle strands.³³

Barnett reassured Pratchett that the adventure game parody material, so overly present in the novels, would be used to form puzzles, which in turn:

Leads to your [Pratchett’s] desired parodies of popular computer games. My current ‘best’ idea is to incorporate this phase as the screen saver. After a certain time being left alone, the game would crash with an ‘out of cheese’ or some other appropriate error message. Rincewind would then tear through the screen and explore the player’s computer.³⁴

An examination of other scripts of the games found in the Smythe/Pratchett archive reveals how the software developers consulted with Pratchett to ascertain the accuracy of the various graphic components of the game, and how these would be represented in the actual narrative and product:

This file contains the look descriptions of all items that can be placed in the player’s inventory. The item names are purely comments at this time. The final names, to shown [sic] on each item, will be quite terse in the game itself. For example ‘a blazing sinister candle’ would become only ‘black candle’... In the meantime I will hold-off on any technical formatting of all other files, until after I receive your revisions.³⁵

However, Pratchett expressed a concern about modern games design putting greater emphasis on presentation than on content, given the fundamental distinction between writing a novel and creating a game script. He felt wary of how the stories he wrote could be interpreted and played in the games. Therefore, the developers sought to reassure him about the treatment of the novels in this media:

I hope you find the treatment to your liking. Please call if clarification is needed at any point. I know you are a little reluctant to mix a lot of Discworld elements together, but I feel that the elements that I have chosen do blend into a nicely layered plot with enough twists and surprises to keep all players happy.³⁶

In his view, although a game was a ‘product’, good marketing was not the only factor to make it successful. The game necessitated to have the right ‘voice’ and speak to the potential players, those who are convinced gamers and those who remain to be won for the cause. Pratchett’s preference was for fans and followers to construct their own games rather than the existence of an official game based on the novels, mainly because the games are not *Discworld* stories as such, although they are based on the story-lines.³⁷ The game developers, particularly Psygnosis and Teeny Weeny Games, strived to create an accurate representation of the *Discworld* universe and its inhabitants. They worked with

Pratchett and his collaborator Stephen Briggs to capture the essence of the books and the descriptions they provided:

This act is really quite a simple warm-up act. Unlike the first game there is no early mundane quests such as banana or book collecting or even finger waggles to get out of gates. Every location within the walls of Ankh-Morpok is available for exploration ... All locations in this act are new to previous Discworld players, even those in Unseen University (which for the purposes of this game really only amount to the great Hall, the High Energy Facility and a ceremonial altar room).³⁸

They blended these elements with an artistic style that was not dissimilar to the artwork used on the book covers. The Smythe/Pratchett collection is rich in such examples of visual representations, which also afford an inside perspective into the creative process and the various actors that intervened.³⁹ A set of illustrations for the individual characters in the computer game, consisting of black and white preliminary sketches that are strikingly similar to the original artwork, are particularly significant to understand this aspect of the game development.⁴⁰

There is a distinct parallelism between the plots in the novels and the puzzle sequences that animate the *Discworld* game, giving the player a sense of satisfaction for having fulfilled a task. Critics described the gameplay structure as involving and inspired.⁴¹ Puzzles and sequences have been picked up and parodied from all manner of sources such as Indiana Jones and other well-known Hollywood films:

We then move in close and see them find a strange divide – three gurgling flasks, some tubes and coils all connected to an hourglass, the sand trickling down. It is obviously some form of Discworld time bomb. If this is starting to resemble the opening sequence in *Lethal Weapon III*, then we're on target. Rincewind, of course is playing the Mel Gibson role, while the Librarian makes a fine Danny Glover. When they play through the scenes just like in the film, not the last time in this game where we will parody Hollywood films.⁴²

This technique echoes the use of parody in Pratchett's novels. As it has been pointed out recently the *Discworld* is a secondary world which gives Pratchett a comic distance from reality in order to criticise the world of the everyday. He parodied our knowledge of the real world through the use of fairy tales, Shakespeare and Hollywood comedy, as well as references to Egypt, China, Arabia and Australia. The absurd in Pratchett's novels is treated as if entirely logical, and the logical becomes on occasion completely absurd.⁴³ This element is likewise present in the computer games.

In the games, as in the books, there is a continuous sense of purpose. The puzzle sequences demand that a series of events unfurl. This, in turn, develops the player's situation within a scenario, in a similar way to how readers engage with a book, as shown in this extract from the game script:

There are certainly enough clues to indicate that Death is on the 'XXXX' continent. Rincewind must travel, at times occasionally repealing any suggestions from the Death of Rats that he should accept his fate and become Death. The game is quite sequential at this point. Rincewind must get out of Ankh-Morpok. The ship at the docks will carry people out of Ankh-Morpok on one condition, that being that they are certified 'dead!' Hence Rincewind must get a death certificate and present it to the death cart collector in the Shades. The collector will then whack Rincewind on the head and toss him on the cart. We then cut to the docks where we see Rincewind's corpse flung on deck with the other bodies in the cart.⁴⁴

One of the most striking elements of the *Discworld* games was the complete aural experience it provided to the player. This was partly due to the game being launched in CD format rather than floppy disk, which enhanced sound. However, the choice of voice-overs by seasoned professional actors such as Eric Idle (Rincewind), Kate Robbins (The Death of Rats), Rob Brydon (Dibbler, Windle Poons, the Patrician, Chuckie and the Fool), and Tony Robinson (he only appeared in *Discworld* but not in *Discworld II*) rendered the end product of a very high quality and considerably closer to a radio play than the average computer game. This was clearly mirrored in the plots and the scripts, which give the impression of a well-structured storyline where each character deploys their own personality:

ACTOR: Rincewind (very drunk and singing)
 Oh show me the way, show me the way!
 So her wassnames flew down the hall,
 and I showed her... um...
 Showed her...
 ACTOR: Librarian (also drunk)
 Oook? look?.⁴⁵

The games retained other distinctive features of the novels. The humour is in Terry Pratchett's style, as it is the use of voices. The games draw inspiration and references from the books whilst maintaining the characteristics and specifications of this kind of product. For example, in the following scene there is an invitation to the player to reflect on their next move:

WIZARD 1: Cogitating, my lad is that process by which the wise make space inside their minds for more ideas.
 RINCEWIND: You make more space for ideas by sitting on your backsides sipping a cup of milky tea?
 DEAN: Hit him! Hit him!
 WIZARD 1: My boy, ideas are normally sold by volume, not by weight. It's best to let them settle so you can find more room in the top.⁴⁶

For many critics, the *Discworld* computer games were one of the best adaptations of a work of fiction to the genre.⁴⁷ Not only do the characters behave in the same way as the ones in the novels, but like in the novels, there is a continuous sense of purpose, as well as plenty of detail and subtlety.⁴⁸ It was the marriage between technology and script-writing – the developers made use of their best artists, musicians and programmers – as well as Pratchett's involvement in overseeing the creative process of the games, which enabled the product to be successful and to meet the expectations of Pratchett's followers and gamers alike.⁴⁹

This analysis of the intersections between the original *Discworld* novels and their adaptation to plots and scripts for computer games demonstrates the need to take a holistic approach to their preservation. The games need to be considered in relation to the novels given the connections between both elements of Pratchett's literary output. Furthermore, this approach would enable a more comprehensive understanding and analysis of their intrinsic characteristics. The very nature of computer and video games is dynamic, interactive and immersive. These are qualities which emerge from the interactions between the creators, developers, players and the

game components such as software, hardware and design. Because the Pratchett games exist in a space where the literary texts that inspired them and the scripts created by the developers are as significant as the experience and the performance, any future digital preservation strategy would necessitate to explore these contextual relationships rather than focus only on ensuring content fixity and preventing technological obsolescence.⁵⁰

Similarly, an exploration of additional sources of evidence in the collection concerning promotional activity around the games, provides further insights into how marketing and communication strategies to sell a specific product document the gaming culture generated by *Discworld* and its impact on existing fans and followers as well on prospective new ones. This is a significant consideration for digital preservation as it has been argued that games are as much digital objects as part of an industry. They make statements and more crucially they are advertisements. Game production often includes advertising, marketing and publicity efforts that inextricably become linked to how players experience the game.⁵¹

Cohn and Wolfe, the PR consultants tasked with drafting the marketing strategy for the launch of *Discworld* for PlayStation in 1995, combined technical as well as psychological factors to promote the game and convert Pratchett's fans to PlayStation and thus widen the appeal of the game to include players who were not *Discworld* or Pratchett's novels readers at the point of the game being released.⁵² This PR campaign focused on two key elements: the idea that *Discworld* could take the player on a challenging journey into an all-absorbing fantasy world of escapism, and the fact that the game continued the legend that began with the novels. The strategy aimed to appeal to three audience groups: new recruits, self-confessed fans, and children. The document further elaborated on the psychological connections of escapism as a form of mental relief and computer games as a way to achieve that. Furthermore, Pratchett was to be central to the PR strategy. He would be used as an example of the man who had travelled from the mundane (Central Electricity Generating Board's nuclear power stations where he worked before becoming a full-time writer) to the fantasy of the *Discworld* novels and games.⁵³

The PR strategists used the internet connection to promote the game, taking into account that many Pratchett's followers used the web to communicate. Therefore, it was deemed appropriate to tap into its potential to engage with them via an A-Z online resource, a competition run via the internet, and by encouraging internet surfers to play a demonstration of the game through an internet site.

When trying to attract the younger audiences, particularly the 10–15 age bracket, the strategists made use of Pratchett's 'a pound for your thoughts' appeal,⁵⁴ a competition to be run in *The Times* children's supplement. Over three weeks, young audiences would be exposed and introduced to the game through a proactive campaign which invited participants to write the next instalment or alternatively design a new adventure for the fantastic characters of *Discworld*, and to contribute £1 to the Orangoutang Foundation. They promised to print winning entrants' ideas in the next edition of the newspaper made up into *Discworld* format by Josh Kirby, the creator of the novels' artwork.

Involving Pratchett in the promotion of the game was central to the PR campaign. A tour of the author through several chains of stores where the game was being commercialised would provide further opportunities for engagement, and would lend

credibility and trustworthiness to the product, by making a direct link between the game and the novels as original sources of inspiration.

The archiving of documentation pertaining to marketing and promotional strategies in the Smythe/Pratchett collection is a significant factor to consider in the context of the digital preservation of the games. As Alasdair Bachell and Matthew Barr have recently shown this is the category of physical records that small independent games developers retain less comprehensively, compared to other materials such as business and legal documents, game-specific materials and artwork.⁵⁵ Whilst this is partly the result of games being increasingly distributed digitally via web platforms, for earlier products such as the *Discworld* games which were published on tape and CD, the availability of such documents provides an extra layer of contextual information to take into account for digital preservation purposes.

Closing remarks

This case study has tried to demonstrate the significance of document-based analogue sources available in the Colin Smythe/Terry Pratchett collection as one of several tools for the future preservation of the *Discworld* games. Considering the development companies that were involved in their creation have disappeared or merged with other businesses without leaving much trace,⁵⁶ what has been archived at Senate House Library provides unique evidence to gain a greater understanding of how these complex digital objects were created, their intersections with Pratchett's literary work and their value in the context of entertainment and contemporary digital culture.

Going forward in future efforts to preserve these games, important lessons can be learnt from recent initiatives that have advocated for the development of good practice, policies and procedures. Examples include the Preserving the Virtual Worlds project funded by the Library of Congress and based at four USA universities. Conversely, the UK National Videogame Archive launched a 'Save the Videogame' initiative a few years ago to raise awareness about the risks involved in passive approaches to digital preservation of video and computer games. It called for the involvement of the industry, museums, libraries and archives, as well as fans and followers in future efforts to archive at-risk heritage.⁵⁷

Given Pratchett's popularity even after his death, a potential avenue for Senate House Library to explore might involve the development of a participatory approach to the digital preservation of these assets. This could be achieved by integrating the analysis of the historical documentation which has been archived in the Smythe/Pratchett collection, the application of existing best practice in the field, and input from the individuals who developed the games,⁵⁸ as well as the *Discworld* players. Whilst the first three elements would appear sufficient to develop a sound strategy for digital preservation, it is the gaming community who might make the most valuable contribution to this endeavour. Even though some of their archival and curatorial practices take place outside the customary professional environment of digital preservation, recent voices have called for a relaxation of copyright legislation and anti-piracy regulations to benefit from their input.⁵⁹

Considering that most computer games hardware and software can become obsolete a mere 5 to 10 years after their release, it is very possible that the games in the Smythe/

Pratchett collection are no longer accessible, that media decay has occurred, and that some of their significant properties such as the colour palette, sound and image effects, and interactivity are no longer maintained. Much can be learned from *Discworld* games enthusiasts, for this user community is in possession of knowledge and expertise derived from purely amateur archival and curatorial practices. Web platforms such as Gog.com, Myabandonware.com, Freegameempire.com or The L-Space Web function as virtual games archives that include discussion forums for gamers to exchange information about *Discworld* which may not exist elsewhere. Unknowingly, these groups share some similarities with personal and community archives, and as Gabriella Redwine has recently shown, regardless of any perceived historical and cultural value, their heritage does matter as it represents an important chance for individuals to give voice to their own perspectives, to make sure the cultural record reflects their lived experiences and stories, and to share those stories with other people if they choose.⁶⁰

Similarly, Senate House Library needs to consider ways in which users will access the born-digital material in this collection in the future. As users' needs change and libraries and archives are providing access to their content and services via online platforms and open data, there is a distinct opportunity to develop public engagement activities that enhance access to these digital objects and widen participation of new and diverse audiences beyond academia.

The use of born-digital objects such as the Pratchett computer games in public engagement programmes would be beneficial for the application of innovative approaches to the curation and interpretation of the collection. Bringing together creative industries professionals, digital humanities experts, digital preservation specialists, literary studies academics and Pratchett's followers would enable the Library to weave an engaging narrative around the Smythe/Pratchett collection, unlock its research and engagement potential, and increase its visibility and accessibility to the wider public.

The curation of a virtual exhibition and the development of additional online tools such as social media, blogs and audience-response projects to elicit additional content, would enable the Library to develop investigative approaches to the preservation and curation of these digital objects. This methodology has been tested recently with born-digital architectural archives resulting in the contextualisation of the digital files and their dependencies in preparation for preservation, arrangement and description.⁶¹ Furthermore, online exhibitions present key advantages over traditional displays as physical barriers such as opening hours, location, fragility of materials, handling restrictions, and the mediation of the curator are bypassed in favour of a more interactive approach that facilitates audience participation in a more interactive and meaningful way.⁶²

As this case study has aimed to demonstrate, any proactive digital preservation strategy targeted at preserving computer games will require an institutional and curatorial approach that takes into consideration the physical objects, from packaging to the medium in which they have been published, as well as their intrinsic characteristics as born-digital objects. Furthermore, such an approach will need to reconstruct the social, historical and literary background which influenced the creation of these digital objects.

When looking inside the Smythe/Pratchett collection, researchers will find a treasure trove of sci-fi/fantasy literary and publishing history over the last 30 years. They will encounter the virtual manifestation of Pratchett's output which enabled him not only to reimagine the dissemination of his literary production through new media, but also to shape it and share it beyond the traditional realm of popular literature and thus reach a much wider public.⁶³

As Pratchett himself declared when discussing his novels, fantasy isn't just about wizards and silly wands, it is about seeing the world from new directions.⁶⁴ In spite of his cautious and often wary approach to the treatment of his novels beyond traditional publishing, Pratchett enabled and participated in the adaptation and promotion of *Discworld* to computer games. In doing so, he contributed to the creation of a new product based on the original story-lines. This led to his exploration of new forms to narrate and share those same stories through digital media in a way which would not betray the original spirit of the novels but was very distinct to them. In doing so, Pratchett pushed the boundaries of traditional publishing, and what it meant for him as an author and co-creator of the games.

Notes

1. Different media sources provide different figures for the number of books Pratchett sold in his lifetime. The figure most frequently quoted is 70 to 85 million books translated into at least 30 different languages: <<https://www.itv.com/news/2015-03-12/terry-pratchett-sold-more-than-70-million-books/>>, accessed 27 January 2019; <<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/sir-terry-pratchett-author-whose-discworld-series-of-novels-sold-millions-and-who-faced-early-onset-10104992.html>>, accessed 27 January 2019; <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/mar/12/terry-pratchett-author-of-the-discworld-series-dies-aged-66>>, accessed 7 April 2019.
2. 'New Year Honours – United Kingdom', *The London Gazette*, 30 December 2008, Supplement No.1, p. 1.
3. Pratchett amassed throughout his life a vast number of fans and followers who even after his death have continued to keep his legacy alive. A search on Google shows a staggering number of websites dedicated to him and his novels. A Discworld convention is held every year to celebrate his novels: <<https://2018.dwcon.org/>>, accessed 7 April 2019.
4. The exhibition was held at the Salisbury Museum from September 2017 to January 2018: <<https://salisburymuseum.org.uk/whats-on/exhibitions/terry-pratchett-hisworld>>, accessed 7 April 2019.
5. Except for two relatively recent brief collections of essays, Pratchett has not been the subject of much academic study or literary criticism: Andrew M Butler, *The Pocket Essential Terry Pratchett*, Pocket Essentials, Harpenden, 2001, and Andrew M Butler, Edward James and Farah Mendleson (eds), *Terry Pratchett: Guilty of Literature*, The Science Fiction Foundation, Reading, 2002. In addition to these works Vic Parker, *Writers Uncovered: Terry Pratchett*, Heineman Library, Oxford, 2006, is a biography for children.
6. Ursula Le Guin and Margaret Atwood paid tribute to Pratchett after his death in this way: <<https://www.terrypratchettbooks.com/tributes-to-sir-terry-pratchett/>>, accessed 7 April 2019.
7. 'Terry Pratchett', published in the Literature Section of the British Council website: <<https://literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/terry-pratchett>>, accessed 7 April 2019.
8. Jonathan Jones, 'Get real. Terry Pratchett is not a literary genius', *The Guardian*, 31 August 2015, <<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/jonathanjonesblog/2015/aug/31/terry-pratchett-is-not-a-literary-genius>>, accessed 7 April 2019. Jones declared not having read any of Pratchett's novels and as a result, he received a backlash from Pratchett's

- followers. He provided a more nuanced view in a subsequent article ‘I have read Pratchett now. It is more entertainment than art’, *The Guardian*, 11 September 2015, <<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/jonathanjonesblog/2015/sep/11/jonathan-jones-ive-read-terry-pratchett-now-its-more-entertainment-than-art>>, accessed 7 April 2019.
9. ‘Terry Pratchett’, published in the Literature Section of the British Council website: <<https://literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/terry-pratchett>>, accessed 7 April 2019.
 10. Stephen Briggs adapted 21 of Pratchett novels to plays and also published them in book form, <<http://www.stephenbriggs.com/the-plays>>, accessed 7 April 2019. Stage adaptations of the Discworld novels have been performed around the world. In January 2009, the National Theatre announced that their annual winter family production in 2009 would be a theatrical adaptation of Pratchett’s novel *Nation*. The novel was adapted by playwright Mark Ravenhill and directed by Melly Still. The production premiered at the Olivier Theatre on 24 November, and ran until 28 March 2010. It was broadcast to cinemas around the world on 30 January 2010: <<https://web.archive.org/web/20110612043837/>>, accessed 7 April 2019. BBC Radio has 4 adapted *The Colour of Magic*, *Only You Can Save Mankind* and *Guards, Guards!* among other Pratchett’s works to radio: <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01r0zb9>>, accessed 7 April 2019.
 11. A simple search in Google using the words ‘Terry Pratchett’ yields a staggering 16 million hits. Some examples of this vast online output range from general websites dedicated to his literary work such as <<https://www.terrypratchettbooks.com/>>, to sites devoted to the *Discworld* universe including the novel series: <<https://discworld.com/>>, official *Discworld* merchandise: <<https://www.discworldemporium.com/>>, and latest news about *Discworld*: <<https://discworldmonthly.co.uk/>>, all accessed 7 April 2019.
 12. Examples of social media platforms dedicated to Pratchett include his own Twitter account, which Rob Wilkins, Pratchett’s literary agent, has continued to maintain after his death: <<https://twitter.com/terryandrob?lang=en.a>>, accessed 7 April 2019.
 13. A sister collection exists at Trinity College Dublin, whose Library holds a back-catalogue of all Pratchett’s works deposited by Colin Smythe and Terry Pratchett in 2009. The collection consists of 1,867 items. The Library of Trinity College Dublin, Annual Report 2016–2017, Trinity College Dublin, The University of Dublin, Dublin, 2017, p. 24, available at <<https://www.tcd.ie/library/assets/pdf/annual-reports/TCD%20Library%20Annual%20Report%202016-17%20Online.pdf>>, accessed 7 April 2019.
 14. Henry Lowood, Devin Monnens, Zach Vowell, Judd E Ruggill, Ken S McAllister, Andrew Armstrong, ‘Before it is too late: a digital game preservation white paper’, *American Journal of Play*, 2009, pp. 151–53, available at <<https://www.journalofplay.org/sites/www.journalofplay.org/files/pdf-articles/2-2-special-feature-digital-game-preservation-white-paper.pdf>>, accessed 7 April 2019.
 15. For an overview of Colin Smythe’s activity as a publisher and Pratchett’s literary agent, see <<https://colinsmythe.co.uk/>>, accessed 7 April 2019.
 16. <<https://www.senatehouselibrary.ac.uk/our-collections/special-collections/printed-special-collections/colin-smythe-terry-pratchett-archive>>, accessed 7 April 2019.
 17. < <http://archives.libraries.london.ac.uk/resources/Pratchett.pdf>>, accessed 7 April 2019.
 18. Best practices for cataloguing of video games using RDA and MARC21, prepared by the Online Audiovisual Catalogers Inc., Cataloging Policy Committee, Video Game RDA Best Practices Task Force, June 2015, available at <https://olacinc.org/sites/capc_files/GameBestPractices.pdf>, accessed 7 April 2019.
 19. In October 2016 Senate House Library in collaboration with Professor Jane Winters and colleagues at the Institute of Historical Research organised a vintage computer and video games workshop as part of the *Utopia and Dystopia* exhibition (October – December 2016): <<https://www.senatehouselibrary.ac.uk/exhibitions-and-events/exhibitions/utopia-and-dystopia>>, accessed 7 April 2019. A mini-exhibition of Terry Pratchett’s computer games was mounted to accompany the event and thus raise awareness of the importance of computer and video games in our cultural history.

20. Joanna Barwick, 'Where Have All The Games Gone?: An Exploratory Study Of Digital Game Preservation', Loughborough University, 2010, doctoral thesis, available at <<https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/dspace-jspui/bitstream/2134/10222/7/Thesis-2012-Barwick.pdf>>, accessed 7 April 2019.
21. Peter Gooding and Melissa Terras, "'Grand Theft Archive": a Quantitative Analysis of the Current State of Computer Game Preservation', *The International Journal of Digital Curation*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2008, pp. 19–41, doi:10.2218/ijdc.v3i2.56. <<http://www.ijdc.net/ijdc/article/view/85/90>>.
22. Some recent studies have looked at these aspects: KM Lee and W Peng, 'What Do We Know about Social And Psychological Effects of Computer Games?: A Comprehensive Review of The Current Literature', in P Vorderer (ed.), *Playing Video Games: Motives, Responses and Consequences*, Lawrence Erlbaum, Mahwah, New Jersey, 2006; J Barwick, 'Where Have All The Games Gone?: An Exploratory Study of Digital Game Preservation', Loughborough University, 2010, doctoral thesis, available at <<https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/dspace-jspui/bitstream/2134/10222/7/Thesis-2012-Barwick.pdf>>, accessed 7 April 2019.
23. Of particular importance is the ground-breaking work undertaken by Jisc which has resulted in The Preservation of Complex Objects series based on several symposia. Volume 1 was concerned with Visualisations and Simulations, whereas volume 2 focused on Software Art. Volume 3 looks at Gaming Environments and Virtual Worlds and was published in 2013, available at <http://www.cdpa.co.uk/POCOS/books/pocos_vol_3.pdf>, accessed 7 April 2019.
24. Senate House Library, Pratchett MS 64, 26 September 1994.
25. Senate House Library, Pratchett MS 16, 1995.
26. Senate House Library, Pratchett MS 18, 8 January 1995.
27. Senate House Library, Pratchett MS 66, [1995?].
28. S Convery, 'Terry Pratchett Novels Destroyed By Steamroller', *The Guardian*, 30 August 2017, available at <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/aug/30/terry-pratchett-unfinished-novels-destroyed-streamroller>>, accessed 7 April 2019.
29. 'Discworld', *PC*, Issue 22, January 1995, p. 57, Senate House Library, [Pratchett] Press Cuttings 148.1.
30. Undated e-mail interview with Terry Pratchett for *PC Zone*, Senate House Library, [Pratchett] Press Cuttings 148.1.
31. C Livingston, 'A Tribute to Terry Pratchett', *PC Gamer*, 12 March 2015, available at <<http://www.pcgamer.com/a-tribute-to-terry-pratchett>>, accessed 7 April 2019.
32. 'For Fans', *PC Home*, December 1994, pp. 86–87, Senate House Library, [Pratchett] Press Cuttings, 148.1.
33. Typescript covering letter from Gregg Barnett to Terry Pratchett, 20 June 1995, Senate House Library, Pratchett MS 16, p. 1.
34. *ibid.*
35. File containing look descriptions of all items that can be placed in the inventory of a player of the computer game *Discworld II*. The list is preceded by a note signed by David Johnston, software development manager, addressed to Terry Pratchett, 8 January 1995, Senate House Library, Pratchett MS 18, p. 1.
36. Gregg Barnett to Terry Pratchett, 20 June 1995, Senate House Library, Pratchett MS. 16, p. 1.
37. E-mail interview with Terry Pratchett, undated, *PC Zone*, Senate House Library, [Pratchett] Press Cuttings 148.1.
38. Details of a treatment for *Discworld II*, the computer game based on Terry Pratchett's *Discworld*, written by Gregg Barnett, 1995, Senate House Library, Pratchett MS 16, p. 5.
39. Examples of artwork used in the games can be found in the Smythe/Pratchett collection, for example, at Senate House Library [Pratchett] Art 39, which includes three colour prints of background scenes for the game, and Senate House Library [Pratchett] Art 30, which consists of a box containing seven glossy stills from the computer game.
40. Senate House Library, Pratchett MS 66.

41. 'Discworld', *PC*, Issue 22, 22 January 1995, pp. 57–58, Senate House Library, [Pratchett] Press Cuttings 148.1.
42. Details of a treatment for *Discworld II*, the computer game based on Terry Pratchett's *Discworld*, written by Gregg Barnett, 1995, Senate House Library, Pratchett MS 16, p. 2.
43. Andrew M Butler, 'Theories of Humour', in Butler, James and Mendlesohn (eds), *Terry Pratchett: Guilty of Literature*, pp. 35–50.
44. Typescript storyline for the *Discworld II* computer game, 1995, Senate House Library, Pratchett, MS 65.
45. Script for the *Discworld II* computer game, c. 1990s, Senate House Library, Pratchett, MS 31.
46. *Discworld* computer game script, 26 September 1994, page 13, Senate House Library, Pratchett, MS 64.
47. 'Discworld', *PC*, Issue 22, January 1995, p. 57. In this review of the game, the author acknowledges that as a result of Pratchett's direct involvement *Discworld* was one of the best adaptations of a work of fiction to gaming. He particularly highlights the fact that the characters behave in the same way they do in the original novels. Similarly, another reviewer commented on the artistic similarities between the style of the games and the book covers, particularly the rich, dense scenery that sets a perfect stage for the game animations, 'Discworld', *CD-ROM Today*, April 1996, p. 25, Senate House Library, [Pratchett] Press Cuttings, 148.1.
48. Unknown source review, Senate House Library, [Pratchett], Press Cuttings, 148.1.
49. 'Discworld', *PC*, Issue 22, January 1995, p. 56.
50. A useful analysis of such approach was sketched by H Loowood, 'Playing History with Games: Steps Towards Historical Archives of Computer Gaming', presented at the Electronic Media Group, Annual Meeting of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, Portland, Oregon, 14 June 2014, available at <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237489246_Playing_History_with_Games_Steps_towards_Historical_Archives_of_Computer_Gaming>, accessed 7 April 2019.
51. Loowood et al., p. 155.
52. PR Proposals for the launch of *Discworld*, presented by Cohn and Wolfe, 25 July 1995, Senate House Library, [Pratchett] Archive Box 9.5.
53. *ibid.*
54. Pratchett said he wished he could have £1 for each idea sent in by imaginative youngsters, *ibid.*
55. Alasdair Bachell and Matthew Barr, 'Video-Game Preservation In The UK: Independent Games' Developers Records Management Practices', *International Journal of Digital Curation*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2014, pp. 148, 156, available at <<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/98882/1/98882.pdf>>, accessed 7 April 2019.
56. Perfect 10 Entertainment was an independent computer game developer, which ceased production in 1999. It began as Teeny Weeny Games in 1991 headed by Angela Sutherland but changed names when merging exclusively with Gregg Barnett's Perfect 10 Productions, a company previously known as Beam Productions. Liverpool-based Psygnosis was the company that published the *Discworld* games. In 1993 the company became a subsidiary of Sony Computer Entertainment.
57. James Newman, 'Save the Videogame! The National Videogame Archive: Preservation, Supersession and Obsolescence', *McJournal: A Journal of Media and Culture*, vol. 12, no. 3, 2009, available at <<http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/view/167>>, accessed 7 April 2019.
58. Gregg Barnett, the main *Discworld* game developer and with whom Pratchett corresponded is still active as a creative consultant in the field of video games.
59. Kari Kraus and Rachel Donahue, 'Do You Want To Save Your Progress: The Role of Professional and Player Communities In Preserving Virtual Worlds', *Digital Humanities Quarterly*, vol. 6, no 2, 2012, available at <<http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/6/2/000129/000129.html>>, accessed 7 April 2019.

60. Gabriella Redwine, *Personal Digital Archiving*, DPC Technology Watch Report 15, 1 December 2015, p. 9, available at <<https://www.dpconline.org/docs/technology-watch-reports/1460-twr15-01/filehttps://www.dpconline.org/docs/technology-watch-reports/1460-twr15-01/file>>, accessed 7 April 2019.
61. Emilie Ratailleau and David Stevenson, 'Archiving Born-Digital Material: The Exhibition as an Investigative Tool', available at <http://www.icam-web.org/data/media/cms_binary/original/1486576704.pdf>, accessed 7 April 2019.
62. Jane Devine Mejia, 'Online Exhibitions and Archives: A Collaborative Project for Teaching and Learning in Design', Eva 2009 Conference, available at <http://www.bcs.org/upload/pdf/ewic_ev09_s3paper3.pdf>, accessed 7 April 2019.
63. 'The History of Discworld', *Retro Gamer*, no. 164, n.d., pp. 82–89.
64. Pratchett pronounced these words on the occasion of receiving the Carnegie medal for children's literature in 2002, available at <<https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/news/pratchett-takes-swipe-at-tolkien-as-he-wins-his-first-award-184067.html>>, accessed 7 April 2019.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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