

Starting a video game collection doesn't need to cost a lot of money. The Nortonville Public Library's collection started with a car wash done by a group of teens and tweens that raised \$140.00. When the Teen Advisory Group gathered to decide how to spend these funds, we gave them two options. They could choose to get three of the latest video games OR they could choose to get on amazon.com and stretch that money buying used games. They opted to purchase used games and were able to get approximately 30 games.

How did we make \$140.00 go so far? Amazon.com offers a plethora of used games for as low as .01 each. Shipping on video games is \$3.99. That made the cost of most of them \$4.00. We were sure to check the ratings on vendors and only purchased from vendors with 95% or better. It was our preference to have instructions and original artwork, so we only ordered items with those included. We also checked the users ratings and picked games with 3 stars or better.

Ebay offers "game lots." You might get several games in a lot for the high bid. We have done this twice. Again, trust your sellers.

Another way we are able to stretch our budget is buying used games from our community. We pay a competitive price compared to what is paid by video games stores that take trade-ins. Of course, we pay close attention to who brings in games and make sure parents know when a child brings in games. After all, we are not in the business of fencing stolen games. We then search on amazon.com and froogle.com for the going rate on those games. We have been able to purchase these games for as little as \$1 each.

Our most popular format continues to be Playstation 2, followed by Nintendo DS. We also offer Wii, PS3, Gamecube, XBOX, XBOX360, PSP, and Gameboy. In our community, the newer systems are not as popular, due to cost, so the older formats still work for us. It is more difficult to purchase PS3 and XBOX360 games on a budget, but not impossible. Gameboy games are still popular because they work on Nintendo DS. Gamecube games are popular because they work on Wii systems. We have not had requests for DS 3D or Kinect games yet. Every year, we ask about systems after Christmas. This is what led us to Nintendo DS.

If budget allowed we would like to offer Prima Guides for games, but we have not reached that point.

Games purchased for our library are rated T or E, but that keeps us from getting popular games like Halo. This was a compromise to get the games in the library.

We are not gamers in our library. We rely on the experts. They happen to be between the ages of 8 and 16. Once young people know you are trying to put together this collection, they will provide lots of input.

We choose to circulate these additional items to make the gaming experience great:

- Guitar Hero add-on controller for Nintendo DS
- Gamecube controllers for use with Wii
- Swords, golf clubs, bats, fishing poles, tennis rackets, guns for Wii controllers
- PS2 Eye Toy camera

Circulation of most of the peripherals is limited to our library users, as shipping them would be too cumbersome.

The popularity of games is cyclical. While Guitar Hero was one of the most popular, it has dropped off in the last year. We use amazon.com and sort the games we have selected by popularity and this helps with the decision making.

The following games seem to endure and remain popular with our users:

- Sims (several titles)
- The Simpsons (several titles, with Hit & Run the all-time favorite, followed by Road Rage)
- Call of Duty (several titles)
- Lego (Indiana Jones, Batman, Harry Potter, Star Wars)
- Cabela's Hunts
- ATV Offroad Fury
- Madden (any year, everyone has their favorites)
- Street (v. 2 and 3 seems to be favs)
- Ratchet and Clank
- Smack Down
- Need for Speed
- Mario
- Any super hero game (Spiderman, Batman, X-Men...)

Some sites we use to make our game decisions:

- gamelab.syr.edu
- videogamelibrarian.com
- warzoned.com
- cheapassgamer.com
- gamefly.com
- joystiq.com

Sites for missing cover art:

- coverproject.net
- vgboxart.com
- cdcovers.cc
- amazon.com

There are not a lot of bib records out there for games, which means cataloging these many items from scratch. We do not have a cataloger on staff, so this meant a learning curve to get these records in the catalog. We had a notebook with a template listing the essential fields needed to catalog the items. This helped us get to the point of being able to catalog without a “cheat sheet.” Below is my version of this “cheat sheet.”

040 c	Library Code (ours is CZ6, but use your own)
245 a	Simpsons (title)
245 b	Road Rage (additional title information)
245 h	electronic resource (format)
250 a	Sony Playstation2 edition (system edition)
260 a	Redwood City, CA (from the back of the case)
260 b	Electronic Arts (from the back of the case)
260 c	2002 (year from back of the case or on the disc)

300 a	1 computer optical disc
300 c	4-3/4 in. (3-1/8 in. for Gamecube, 1-1/4 in. for DS)
300 e	+ instr. (if it comes with instructions)
500 a	1-4 players (you might have several items from back of case)
500 a	vibration function
521 a	Rated T for Teen, cartoon mischief, mild violence, suggestive themes. (from case)
521 b	ESRB (rating organization for games)
538 a	Requires Sony Playstation2 game console for play.
655 a	Video games

Our loss of games is very low, definitely lower than book or DVDs. The demographic checking out these items wants to check out more in the future, so that helps. We have had a few empty cases stolen, but this hasn't been a big deal. We keep games in cd file folders in bins at the desk. The cases are empty on the shelf.

Finally, by adding games to your collection, you are demonstrating your desire to address the needs of a group that is underserved in smaller communities – gamers. All gamers are not teenagers, though many are. Once you begin offering games you will gain new respect from future decision makers, their parents and grandparents. Our experience has shown behavior problems have lessened and many library users now feel more comfortable using the library. Circulation has increased, with games now accounting for over 10% of our total. We believe a large part of the increase we see in young adult circulation is attributable to the games, as many of these customers were not library users before we offered them.

Good luck building your collection. We hope you find the rewards as great.