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# “A Link to the Past”: Remastered Videogames and the Material Archive

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## Abstract

In the past ten years, the academic and archival communities have written extensively about the need to formally preserve video games as cultural records (Gooding and Terras, 2008; Monnens *et al.*, 2009; Newman, 2012). Yet the idea of a video game as a defined material object has been challenged by digital delivery, and the trend for “remastered” versions of classic games. Similarly to remastered music albums and movies, this process can drastically change the material experience of playing certain games, from the material interface of consoles, controllers and display devices, to improved graphics and menus, and even changes in the fundamental gameplay experience. This paper will argue that the combined phenomena of remastering and digital delivery move games away from their material roots to become objects of flux, constantly subjected to a dynamic process of reinterpretation.

We will provide a theoretical approach to the remastering of classic video games, by comparing videogame remastering to the music industry, drawing on archival theory and exploring recently remastered series such as *Final Fantasy*, *the Legend of Zelda*, and *Resident Evil*. The paper will trace the way in which these widely recognised classics of the medium have been recreated, repurposed and reimagined through the changing technology of contemporary games hardware. By contrasting the shifting ludic, technological and social experiences of these classic games with the literature on technological solutions to video game preservation, we will interrogate the concept of archival stability as it relates to a medium defined by technological innovation.

## References

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### **Speaker biographies and contact details**

**Dr. Paul Gooding** is the Eastern ARC Fellow for Digital Humanities at UEA. An Early Career Researcher with a background in libraries, his research explores the practical and theoretical implications of digitisation of heritage materials on research and cultural practices. Before completing his PhD at UCL Centre for Digital Humanities in 2014, he worked as a librarian in both broadcast media and Higher Education. In his role as librarian for BBC Sport, he worked on a number of major sporting events including the 2008 Olympics and 2010 World Cup. He also worked as project officer for the Digital Preservation Coalition, where he was responsible for dissemination activities for the EU-funded TIMBUS Project. He is currently the reviews editor for Digital Scholarship in the Humanities, the official journal of the Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations.

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**Stephen Bennett** is a Lecturer in Humanities, located in the Interdisciplinary Institute for the Humanities at UEA and previously taught in the School of Music, specialising in media - based technologies. Stephen has had a varied career in the music, music technology, television, and film and multimedia fields prior to his work at UEA, as well as a background in research science. A long-term contributor to the UK's most popular monthly music technology magazine, Sound on Sound, he's also written several books and other articles on the same subject. His name has appeared on the credit list of albums alongside Steven Wilson (Porcupine Tree), Hugh Hopper (Soft Machine), David Torn (David Bowie), Tim Bowness (No-Man), Robert Fripp (King Crimson) and Roger Eno.

Stephen's current interests include the ephemera of digital and the restoration and reimagining of potentially historic software, the history of recorded sound and the interface of physical controllers, open source hardware and computers to manipulate and play 'old school' analog synthesisers.

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