Will Wright

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**SimCity** and **The Sims** are Game Developer Will Wright’s two games that changed the gaming industry. Born in 1960, Will Wright graduated high school at the age of 16. He attended college at Louisiana State University, Louisiana Tech, and The New School in Manhattan. He never completed his college degree. His college studies included architecture, economics, mechanical engineering, military history, and language arts. His college studies did not include any formal computer science. Will Wright took his interests in architecture, economics, and mechanical engineering, and used these interests to develop a game that revolutionized the gaming industry.

In 1984 Will Wright developed his first game which was called **Raid on Bungeling Bay**. It was a helicopter game in which players dropped bombs on islands. Wright discovered that he was more interested in building the islands than he was in actually playing the game. This experience leads him to the concept of simulation.

In 1987 Will Wright and Jeff Braun co-founded Maxis. Braun was interested in investing in the computer gaming industry; Wright was interested in game development. In 1989 Maxis Released **SimCity.**

**SimCity** showcased Wrights’s interests in architecture and building, engineering, economics, and history (People Pill) The game incorporates the concept of simulation. **SimCity** is a game that involves building a city. The gamer is the mayor of the city; his/her job is to grow the city. As the mayor, the gamer must build roads, houses, stadiums, movie theaters, transportation, etc; essentially, all the physical aspects of a city. In addition to the building, the gamer needs to supply the city with water and electricity. Providing utilities to the city becomes increasingly challenging for the gamer: the bigger the city, the more difficult it becomes to connect water and electricity to the houses because other buildings are getting in the way. At the same time that the gamer is building the city, he must also manage its expenses. If the gamer is making more money than he/she is spending, city residents are happy; they consider the gamer to be a good mayor. However, if the gamer is spending recklessly, city residents will move out. The gamer also needs to consider the issue of taxes; there must be a balance. Taxes generate money for the gamer to use; however, if taxes are too high, people will move out of the city. Yet, if taxes are too low, the city will potentially fail.

**SimCity** was a huge hit. Gamer’s loved it. In its first two weeks of its release, it sold 1.1 million copies (Wilde,2013). The success of **SimCity** encouraged the development of other simulation games such as **SimTower**, **Utopia: Creator of a Nation (1991),** and **Caesar (1992)** (Moss,2015). New versions of **SimCity** are released every so many years. EA purchased Maxis for 125 million dollars in June of 1997.

Now working for EA, Will Wright released **The Sims** in February 2000. This game, too, revolutionized the gaming industry. When playing **The Sims,** the gamer can create his/her own sim. He/she can change his/her hair, eyes, clothes, etc. The player can even name the Sim. **The Sims** is a game about everyday life. The player’s Sim has to get a job in order to afford his/her house. When the player first starts the game, the only house the Sim can afford is a very basic house: no tv, bed, dresser, table, couch, or chair. The first thing the player can buy for the sim is a cot; but, it turns out that sim never likes the cot. Every day the Sim goes to work for multiple hours. During this time, the player can either wait for the Sim to come home; or fast forward the time of day so he/she can get home quicker. The player also has to make sure the Sim is healthy, which includes showering, sleeping, and eating; happy; entertained, etc. A sim can marry another sim. Once that happens, the player needs to make sure the spouse is happy as well. The player can control that Sim too. If the Sim is late for work or doesn’t show, the sim is fired. Once the player earns more money, the player can buy a new house for his/her sim, or build upon the current one. Essentially, the player controls the Sim’s life: he/she gets to decide what happens to the sim.

Like **SimCity**, **The Sims** was incredibly popular. By its 10th anniversary (2010), more than 125 million copies had been sold worldwide. “It has had a profound influence on game design, broadened the definition of a game, and become embedded in pop culture (Takahashi,2010).” Teens and young adults, especially young women, find **The Sims** incredibly appealing. **The original Sims**, and it’s subsequent versions, are the number one PC game franchise of all time (Takahashi,2010).

**SimCity** and **The Sims** dramatically changed the gaming industry. When each game was released, it was the first of its type to be successful. Other game developers had attempted building simulation games, but it was Will Wright, in **SimCity**, who successfully incorporated all the different elements. **SimCity** was a different type of game; it required thought and planning. The game included real-life situations that needed to be addressed. The environment in the game was not static. The results of the player’s actions were unknown: outcomes could be good or bad. **The Sims** game was totally unique when it was released. “No one believed that a video game about people and social interaction, without shooting, driving, or what passes for action, could be published successfully, said John Riccitiello, Chief Executive of EA (Takahashi,2010).”

These two games have also impacted society as a whole. **The Sims** game has been featured on magazine covers; Ikea allowed its furniture designs to be featured in the digital catalog for sim players; and recording artists like the Black Eyed Peas, Katy Perry, and the Pussy Cat Dolls have all recorded songs in Simlish, the language of the sim game (Takahashi,2010) **SimCity** has introduced the concept of urban planning to a new generation. Many individuals who are urban planners trace the beginning of their careers back to playing **SimCity** (Roy,2019). Will Wrights’s accomplishments in the gaming industry have carried over into every day, non-gaming life. He has truly been significant.

**Citations**

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