

ORAL HISTORY DOCUMENTARY: An Interview with Brian Moriarty

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by

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Abstract

We interviewed Brian Moriarty to further expand the Oral History Documentary of videogames that will eventually be part of a museum exhibit. We conducted various test interviews to practice interview techniques and editing styles. We also watched documentaries by Seth Gordon, Errol Morris and Jason Scott as examples of interview and editing styles.

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1. Introduction

The objective of the IQP was to add to the Oral History Documentary by interviewing Brian Moriarty, author and developer of games like *Wishbringer*, *Trinity*, and *Loom*. Like the previous project we would edit the footage into short clips to later be used as a museum exhibit. In interviewing Moriarty we wanted him to discuss what it was like working for Infocom and later LucasFilm Games, now known as LucasArts. We also wanted him to talk about what it was like working in the game development industry when it was still new. Finally, because Brian has been active in the industry for so long we wanted him to discuss how the industry has changed over the years.

Using *The King of Kong*, *BBS: The Documentary* and *First Person* as examples we conducted test interviews with ourselves and other students. We then practiced editing techniques by cutting the footage into shorter segments. Through the practice interviews and editing we were able to clearly define which group member was better suited to conduct the interview and which member would work the camera. The practice interviews also gave us a better idea of what would be important for the final interview. Before we began practicing we had not considered aspects such as lighting and audio. These are two key elements that we had previously taken for granted.

We also had the opportunity to visit independent documentary filmmaker Jason Scott. Being able to meet with Jason gave us a lot of valuable information that we used going into our final interview with Brian Moriarty. Without Jason's help we would not have paid attention or understood the importance of the backdrop behind Brian while he was being interviewed. He also left us with important editing techniques that can be seen in our final results.

The following paper documents our process and methodology.

2. The Oral History Project

2.1 The Big Plan

The Oral History Documentary is a multi-year project aimed at documenting the history of videogames and the industry. The primary focus is to interview inventors, developers and artists that were around at the birth of the industry. The secondary aim was to find someone that helped pioneer the industry, but has since retired. We wanted the subject to be able to be honest and if someone was still new to the industry that would watch what they say. We want the documentary to be told from the point of view of visionaries that helped the industry get started which is why we decided to conduct interviews.

The final goal for each individual project is to edit the interview into five or six clips of four to five minutes in length. Eventually the clips from each project will be put into a museum exhibit. As an exhibit the project will showcase the early years of the industry as well as the people that contributed to the start. Until more interviews are conducted it is hard to say how the exhibit can best be displayed. However, with each person interviewed another piece of history is unlocked and able to be shared.

An IQP is supposed to relate technology and science to society or human needs. The Oral History Documentary satisfies both of these requirements in multiple ways. At a high level, both requirements are filled by the nature of the project. Videogames represent a large portion of entertainment technology and documenting their history fills a social need to pass on information. After looking into the project more the two themes of technology and society are even more apparent. Using digital video equipment and computer editing programs comprised a large portion of the technology half of the project. The interview segment of the project encompassed the society and human needs portion of project. Currently there are many forms of written history about videogames; however, there are few

sources that use the people who were there to tell what happened. That is the issue we are trying to address in the project.

2.2 The First Year

The Oral History Documentary started in the 2006-2007 school year by a group of three students that interviewed Ralph Baer. For their project they met Ralph Baer at his house to conduct the interview. While interviewing Baer, they were shown inventions that Baer had created in the past as well as projects and inventions on which he was currently working.

2.3 This Year

This year we continued the project by interviewing Brian Moriarty. Brian designed, authored and coded games like *Wishbringer* and *Trinity* while working for Infocom, one of the leading game development companies in the 1980's.

When we first began the project we were not sure what to expect. We knew that we would be continuing a previous project, but we did not know what that entailed. The only definite facts that we had were that we knew would be interviewing one of the older members of the early videogame community and would eventually edit the footage down into smaller clips. Entering the project we did not know who we were going to be interviewing or what the timeline was.

Practice played a big part in the project. From the beginning we practiced using the cameras, carried out practice interviews, and proceeded to practice editing them together. Going into the project we believed that practicing these skills would only take a few weeks and that we would spend the rest of the time researching our subject. We also assumed we would be interviewing our subject towards the

end of the first term or the beginning of the second term. Interviewing our subject early would give us most of the second term to do our editing and the third term to work on the paper.

In the beginning this seemed like an optimal timeline. We did not think that practicing interview techniques or camera work required much time. We were naïve in our assumptions because there was more that went into interviewing than we realized. To us, an interview consisted of little more than pointing the camera at the subject and asking questions. We would later find out that there were many factors that went into editing than we had previously thought.

2.4 The Future

Currently the future of the project remains the same. Every year there will be another group of students that will interview another person that helped pioneer the videogame industry. As more pioneers are interviewed a more detailed history emerges. As we meet with people in the industry they are often able to help us connect with others. In the case of Brian Moriarty, he has offered to help us contact Steve Meretzky another pioneer that Brian worked with at Infocom.

As the projects and the Documentary continues, the more detailed the history becomes. One person may remember events that another does not, or more interestingly they may have two conflicting stories. As information and histories are collected the raw footage will be kept so that another project group could potentially put all of the pieces together.

3. Interview Techniques

3.1 Research

Researching and studying different interview techniques became a real eye opener for us. Since neither of us have interviewed someone before we did not know the different factors that went into interviewing a subject. In the beginning we did not consider technical aspects such as lighting, camera angles or what was in the background. We began watching various styles of interviews to learn different techniques.

We started the project by looking at the work that last year's project group completed to get an idea of what we were working towards. We watched the individual interviews they did as well as their edited interview with Ralph Baer. This gave us an idea of ways to divide the interview up under specific topics as well as ideas for camera angles.

Within the first few weeks of starting the project we took a trip to Kendall Square Cinema in Boston, Massachusetts. The movie *The King of Kong: A Fistful of Quarters* has just come out and it was our first chance to see a professional documentary. The movie told the story of Steve Wiebe as he tried to beat the high score for Donkey Kong held by Billy Mitchell. After seeing the movie we had a better understanding of how a documentary can be turned into a feature movie. We later found out that the movie was heavily biased towards Steve Wiebe. There were many parts in the documentary that portrayed Mitchell as a mean person who constantly avoided Wiebe. In reality the two had played together on several occasions and have even given interviews together.

After finding out that most of the documentary was misleading and controversial it taught us an important lesson. As a film editor you have the ability to create a story and have control over what is

portrayed. This, of course, leaves the editor with a huge responsibility. As we saw in *The King of Kong*, this can be used to mislead the viewer and present a story or perspective that never happened. As an editor you walk a fine line between getting across the point you want to make without putting words in the subject's mouth. This is something that we didn't originally consider. The movie also showed that you can take a documentary on videogames and turn it into a compelling story.

After seeing *The King of Kong* we wanted to see more examples of different ways interviews can be conducted and edited. This led us to a show called *First Person*, a television show directed by Errol Morris. In this show Morris would interview people of various, interesting backgrounds. What made the show interesting were his use of editing and multiple camera angles to enhance the story being told by the interviewee. What made the interviews even more interesting was how he filmed the interview. He used a camera setup he called the Interrotron. "The Interrotron was a way of doing a lot of different things at once... there's just a half silvered mirror, an image of me floating in front of the lens. It allows for direct eye contact with me, and out at the audience at the same time. Which I don't think has ever existed before."¹ The other main aspect of his interview style was that he had much closer shots of the interviewee than we did in our first practice interviews. He would combine these close shots with medium range shots to show the person's emotion and body language during the interview.

3.2 First Attempts

With some help from the Academic Technology Center (ATC) we borrowed the necessary camera equipment and began filming. Since it was our first time interviewing we did not put too much emphasis on footage and decided, instead, to focus on the questions. For the first interview we would

¹ Morris, Errol. Interview Keith Phipps <http://www.avclub.com/content/node/23263>, December 9, 1997.

try to find out more about each other's pasts and how it related to our majors. The footage was then roughly edited together and title cards were used to present a question.

Our first interviews turned out badly. Even though our focus was on asking questions the interviews felt very bland. The footage consisted of the interviewee sitting in a chair responding to questions that were asked with little else going on. Using title cards to introduce the topics broke up the interview and made it feel more disjointed. We knew that this was not the look or feel that we wanted.

After our initial attempt we used the footage from our first interviews with a new goal. We set out to re-edit the previous footage in a more interesting and fluid manner. To do this we tried to edit the footage so that it still told a story, but did not rely on title cards to introduce topics. This was a hard task to accomplish because we conducted our first interviews poorly and did not have much footage to work with. When we first started interviewing we sat down and brainstormed questions that we knew the other person would be able to answer easily. This added to the pre-scripted feel of the interviews.

3.3 Jason Scott Techniques

Jason Scott is a local Documentary film maker that lives in Waltham, Massachusetts. In 2005 Jason created *BBS: The Documentary*, a five hour long documentary about the history of bulletin board systems (BBS). Watching this documentary was more helpful than *The King of Kong* and *First Person* because it related more to what we were trying to accomplish. In his documentary Jason conducted interviews with people that were involved in the history of BBS. In *The King of Kong*, the documentary was created as the events were happening which did not apply to how our project was being conducted. In Jason's documentary the events that he covered happened long before he began his documentary. Like us, Jason was creating an oral history.

We had the pleasure of meeting Jason Scott at his house. Jason gave us valuable information on interview and editing techniques. When we first arrived he showed us footage for one of his next documentaries *Got Lamp* a documentary about text adventure games. In his interviews he pointed out the importance of having good lighting so that half of the subject was not in the shadows. He also went on to emphasize the need for good audio. The reason clear audio is important is because an audio problem is harder to make up for. If the video is corrupt, or unusable it can be covered by using alternate footage. Audio, however, cannot be replaced if there is too much background noise, or the subject is too quiet.

The most helpful part of the evening was when Jason interviewed Dennis to show us an example of how he conducts his interviews. He showed us the camera, lighting and audio equipment that he uses and the different background and ambient issues to be aware of. For instance, he had an object on his bookshelf in the background that was slightly reflective. If he moved around at all while he was filming his reflection would change and show up on the video. The same was true for any lighting he used; he had to make sure that no matter where he moved himself or the camera that it would not detract from the interview.

Once he actually began the interview he showed us some of his techniques for doing a blind interview. A blind interview just means that Jason had no previous knowledge about me before starting the interview. While this is not advised for people just learning how to interview, for someone who has done as many interviews as Jason it is much easier to do. Throughout the interview he would respond to words or phrases that Dennis said to try and get him to expand on a topic or start a new one. During the interview he filmed shots of Dennis's hand gestures to use later if certain video clips did not look good or fit well. After the interview was over he shot additional footage Dennis sitting and looking thoughtful so that there was more additional footage that could be used.

Meeting with Jason was a huge help in making the rest of the project go smoothly. After some of our initial interviews we knew that we needed to improve upon lighting and Jason helped stress that. He also made us more aware of how objects in the background can improve or hinder an interview. The background objects can help tell something about the subject you are interviewing, but they can also cause distractions if reflections are present. His emphasis on audio also helped to improve our final interview. After meeting with Jason we looked into the different microphones that the ATC had available for the cameras that we were using. This provided us with much more clear audio for the interview with Brian.

3.4 Second Attempts

After watching *BBS: The Documentary* and more episodes of *First Person* we started to realize how stale our single, far-shot interviews looked. We then decided to re-interview each other. This time we tried to focus on getting closer camera shots. The primary focus was on the person's face but we were also wanted to pull back and get medium-ranged shots of the person's chest and up. By doing this we made the interview feel more personal and more interesting. Unlike in our first interviews, having both medium and close shots gave the interview more visual action because we were able to cut between the different ranges. When we went to edit the interviews we tried piece the two together to combine both of them into one fluid story.

For our final set of interviews we each interviewed a friend. This was our first time interviewing people other than ourselves. This alone was a big change because we were interviewing new subjects that were not used to being on camera or being asked questions. Another change was that with all of our previous interviews we had to work the camera while simultaneously asking the questions at the same time. For the final interviews we had a chance to focus more on specific roles. Since we were

interviewing new people one of us was able to focus solely on interviewing and asking questions while the other was able to work on camera skills. This gave us a chance to really explore the two roles and helped us decide who would be the interviewer and who would work the camera when it came time to interview Brian Moriarty.

The other major difference was that we had to interview someone for an hour. This was considerably longer than our previous interviews that lasted twenty minutes at most. Having a chance to interview someone for an hour gave us an idea of the scope of the final interview. Interviewing someone for an hour showed us some of the issues that come up in longer interviews. One of the biggest issues that we ran into with the longer interviews was getting the other person to open up. In the beginning when the camera was first turned on the subjects seemed a little more hesitant to talk. After the first ten minutes the subjects started to feel more comfortable about talking in front of the camera. Even after they felt comfortable talking on camera, often times the subject would not have much to say about a topic and would give short answers. This helped us practice our skill in getting the subject to expand on a topic or ask questions that the subject was more interested in answering.

4. The History of Brian Moriarty

Moriarty built his first “computer” in the fifth grade². At the time Moriarty had no idea that computers would play such an important role in his career. After high school he attended Southeastern Massachusetts University. In 1978 he graduated with a degree in English Literature. Even with his degree, his first job after graduating was as a sales clerk at a RadioShack in Worcester, Massachusetts.

² "Infocom Authors - Brian Moriarty." Infocom - The Master Storytellers. <http://www.infocom-if.org/authors/moriarty.html> (accessed Feb. 10, 2008).

On his first day working at RadioShack a *TRS-80* was delivered. *TRS-80* was the first mass-market microcomputer; it contained a full QWERTY keyboard, and included a monitor. With this computer he taught himself how to program in the computer language BASIC which he used to write a fortune telling program. He later taught himself Z-80 assembly³ before moving on to a new job. Brian eventually left RadioShack and in 1981 started working at the speaker manufacturer Bose. While working as a technical writer at Bose, a coworker brought in an Atari 800 and showed Brian the game *Star Raiders*. That is what cemented his interest in games.

After seeing his coworkers Atari 800 Moriarty wanted to buy his own. He eventually found a small dealer that was selling the Atari 800 units. It turned out that the dealer was an old friend and he was publishing an Atari hobbyist magazine. A few months later he took a pay cut to work for the *Atari Newsletter And Lots Of Games*, or *ANALOG* Computing magazine. At *ANALOG* Brian would play and review games as well as write his own using BASIC. In 1982 he had his first taste of an Infocom game called *Deadline*. The text parser and story that *Deadline* had were more advanced than most of the games he had reviewed⁴. Infocom, being in Cambridge, Massachusetts, was only an hour away and he knew he had to work there.

Finally, two years later in 1984 Moriarty was hired by Infocom as a technician. At the time Infocom games ran on a virtual machine, this allowed Infocom to program games once and the virtual machine would allow it to run on any brand of computer. Brian was tasked with updating and improving the interpreter for Atari, Apple, Commodore and Tandy machines. A position had opened up for an

³ Moriarty, Brian. "Brian Moriarty | Lectures | The Secret Of Psalm 46 (2002)." Ludix Entertainment . <http://ludix.com/moriarty/psalm46.html> (accessed February 12, 2008).

⁴ Moriarty, Brian. Interview by Adventure Classic Gaming. <http://www.adventureclassicgaming.com/index.php/site/interviews/212/>, November 15, 2006.

Implementor, the name they gave game authors. Originally someone else was hired, however, things did not work out with the new employee and eventually Brian was promoted to Implementor.

The first game that Moriarty started working on was a called *Wishbringer*. The idea came from, the then head of marketing at Infocom, Mike Dornbrook. He wanted Moriarty to design an easy adventure game that would bring in new adult players. *Wishbringer* was finally released in 1985 and was a big hit selling almost a hundred thousand copies⁵, which was significantly higher than the industry norm of fifty thousand⁶.

The following year in 1986 Moriarty created the game *Trinity*. "You're neither an adventurer nor a professional thrill-seeker. You're simply an American tourist in London...World War III starts and the city is vaporized moments after the story begins...if you can figure out the pattern of events, you'll wind up in the New Mexico desert, minutes before the culmination of the greatest scientific experiment of all time: the world's first atomic explosion, code-named Trinity."⁷ Moriarty traveled around the world researching various locations that would be in the game. He had even visited the Trinity site so that when he described the location in the game it was as accurate as possible.

Brian continued to work at Infocom until the very end. A failed database product, Cornerstone, and the rise of graphic based games all contributed to the end of Infocom. Eventually Infocom was sold to Activision⁸. In 1988 after leaving Infocom, Brian's talent landed him a job at Lucasfilm Games, which

⁵ Ibid. "Infocom Authors - Brian Moriarty."

⁶ *The New York Times*. Nov. 1, 1985. "Thoughts on Software Piracy."
<http://www.csd.uwo.ca/Infocom/Articles/NZT/Nztwin85.html#editorial> (accessed February 28, 2008).

⁷ Scheyen, Peter. "Trinity." Department of Computer Science - UWO. <http://www.csd.uwo.ca/Infocom/trinity.html> (accessed Feb. 12, 2008).

⁸ <http://www.infocom-if.org/company/company.html>

became LucasArts Entertainment Company in 1993⁹. At the time Lucasfilm Games was one of the most powerful graphical adventure gaming companies.

While at Lucasfilm Games Brian began working on the game *Loom*. One of the key aspects about *Loom* was that it was designed so the player could not fail. The game followed the idea that the player should never be killed or forced to restart the game. The idea came about after Moriarty found that the players enjoyed games more when they were able to finish them. Many of the older games would have traps or puzzles that forced you to die so you would know what not to do next time. This led to players having to constantly reload the game and replay through sections. By avoiding the “forced restart” game mechanic people new to computer games enjoyed the game immensely. Hardcore gamers also enjoyed the game, but because there was no forced restart aspect to the game they were able to beat it fairly quickly. The game went on to sell over half a million copies and received many industry awards, quite the feat when most game developers would be excited to sell a hundred thousand copies in those days.¹⁰

Moriarty eventually left LucasFilm Games in 1993. He spent some time working at as a Senior Game Designer at the now defunct Rocket Science where he created *Lodestar: The Legend of Tully Bodnine*. After Rocket Science, Moriarty and friends formed their own company called Mpath. Mpath was originally formed to create multiplayer games over the internet. Later, Mpath change their name to Hearme. In 2001, however, the company filed for bankruptcy. Moriarty currently works for the gaming company ImaginEngine as a senior producer.

⁹ "LUCASARTS MILESTONES" LucasArts.com. <http://www.lucasarts.com/company/about/page3.html> (accessed Feb. 27, 2008).

¹⁰ Schafer, Tim Interview by VideoGamesBlogger. <http://www.videogamesblogger.com/>

5. The Big Interview

5.1 Logistics

After setting the date to interview Brian at his home in Upton, Massachusetts we began finalizing everything we would need for the interview. Our primary concern was making sure that we were able to reserve the necessary camera equipment. We met with Jim Cormier from the ATC who was a huge help for everything technical in our project. He made sure that for our interview we had all of the required camera equipment including a tripod, a lapel microphone that could be clipped onto Brian's shirt, and a fifty-foot XLR extension cable for the microphone.

The night before the interview we made sure to run multiple test interviews to make sure the camera was working. This was also the first time we had used the lapel microphones so we ran multiple tests to determine the optimal placement of where to place it on the subject's shirt. The morning of the interview we made sure to bring plenty of extra lighting as well as an extension cord in case an electrical outlet was not close by.

Once arriving at Brian's house we followed Jason Scott's advice about looking for a room that was well lit. Brian's house had a room that was ideal for the interview for many reasons. From a filming standpoint the room had ample lighting from overhead lights as well as sunlight that came in through the window. Having plenty of light was important to us because it was something we often lacked in most of our previous interviews. The other aspect that made the room desirable was the wealth of items in the background. Behind Brian's chair were multiple bookshelves full of books and movies which emphasized Brian's intellectual nature.

5.2 Problems

The first issue we ran into was that we did not know who we were going to be interviewing until towards the end of the first term. At the beginning of the term there were three people that had been potential subjects for the interview. Unfortunately we were not able to get in contact with them. A few weeks into the first term went by we tried to find other local game developers that we would allow us to interview them. This was when we were finally able to get in contact with Brian Moriarty. However, because we did not get a hold of Brian until late in the term it gave us less time to work on researching him.

Towards the end of the first term and the beginning of the second Brian was busy traveling for business. This made it much harder than expected to set up a time and place for the interview. Once he returned from his travels we were finally able to set a time and place. After setting the date, we had less than a week to reserve the camera equipment and to run final tests for any new equipment we wanted to try and use.

Once we finally made it to Brian Moriarty's house the rest of the interview went well. Brian's house was well lit and was full of interesting background items that tells more about him.

5.3 New Facts about Brian

The "computer" that Brian built in fifth grade was not actually a computer like the standard at the time; instead, it was *Dr. NIM* a plastic computer game. *Dr. NIM* was a simple plastic toy with a set of marbles that would play the logic game of NIM. In the fifth grade Moriarty built his own version of *Dr. NIM* out of wood. Two years later when he was in the seventh grade he built a second version of *Dr. NIM* using LED lights and a battery.

When Brian first attended Southeastern Massachusetts University he majored in Visual Design. However, after the first year the cost of Art supplies started adding up. Brian was on the newspaper and had many friends that were English majors which is what influenced his decision to eventually change his major to English.

After college, aside from working at RadioShack, Brian also worked at a movie theater in downtown Worcester, Massachusetts. He then got a job at the radio station WNEB, a station that changed their format every few months. In the nine months time that Brian worked at the station it went from playing Country to Disco to Adult Rock.

6. Editing

6.1 Why Edit?

With an end goal of creating footage that can be used as part of museum exhibit we knew editing would play a big role. Through editing we are able to take over two hours of footage and condense it shorter, more engaging clips. With an interview this long there is often information that might not be relevant to the topics we wanted to show.

Another reason for editing is to remove the interviewer's questions from the video. If a person wants to watch the interview of Brian they are more interested in his responses than the questions that were asked. Throughout the interview you are constantly asking questions and probing for more information. The questions are not important for the viewer to hear so they should be removed. Along with removing questions we also wanted to remove any distractions or mistakes. This included things like Brian stuttering, coughing, or getting up to find something he was talking about.

Editing the footage also gave us a way to piece the interview together. Over the course of two hours there are many topics that can be covered. In some cases something Brian mentioned later in the interview related to something he said earlier on. Other times Brian would go on a tangent before returning to the original point. In both cases there was usable information but it was spread out over the course of the interview. By editing the different parts together we can create and expand on a topic that would have otherwise not existed.

6.2 How to Edit

There are many different ways to edit. Most editing comes from having the proper tools and vision. To edit the footage we had of Brian Moriarty we started by watching the interview from the beginning and any time he talk about a subject that we felt would make an interesting theme for a topic we made a note of it. Once we found a theme we would go through the footage again and try and find clips that also fit the theme. In the beginning of the editing process we had loose restrictions and any time we found a clip that was related we would extract the clip and put it into a group with the other clips. We would add a short description of the clip so it would be easier to find if it fit a different theme better.

After we gathered clips that fit the theme we were working on we would put them all onto the video timeline. This allowed us to watch through the footage once to see how well it fit together as is. After seeing the footage we had available we looked at what clips worked well together. Once we found clips that fit together we would try and keep them together while we organized the rest of the clips. Often clips would be added, removed or cropped so that it helped the topic flow more fluidly.

After getting the clips into the order that we wanted we began to polish the clips. To polish the clips we would listen to what Brian was saying and try and remove any instances of him coughing,

stuttering, or saying the word “um”. This also included making sure that the end of each clip did not have any extra audio or movement that would make the transition to the next clip look awkward. Transitions and B-line footage were also added where necessary to help make the segment look more polished.

When meeting with Jason Scott he showed us the files from his BBS documentary as he explained his editing procedure. After gathering all of his footage Jason went through what he had recorded and began to break the shots down into clips before doing anything else. As he pulled out clips he would rename the clip with a description of what the footage contained. He also added the short descriptive term, like “excellent” or “must use”, signifying clips that he thought were really important. This was a process that Jason describes as “somewhat tedious but effective ultimately.”¹¹ While we agreed that organizing the clips would ultimately be helpful, with the limited amount of time for the project we decided to save time and begin editing from the start. After viewing the footage a few times it became much easier to find clips and we feel that we did not sacrifice much by not organizing the clips beforehand.

6.3 Tips on Editing

Most of the useful information we learned about editing came from Jason Scott. Meeting with him early is a good start for learning different editing techniques that can make editing the project easier.

One of the most useful pieces of information that he shared with us is the idea of keeping clips under thirty seconds long. This is something he mentioned when we spoke with him at his house and mentioned again while giving a lecture at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. During the lecture he

¹¹ Jason Scott talks more about his editing in his lecture "The Sum of The Parts: Editing in Film and Life." Presented at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Worcester, MA, January 17, 2008. It is available online at http://www.imgd.wpi.edu/speakers/movies/Scott_2008.mov

mentioned that he feels people cannot handle sustained shots anymore because it makes them uncomfortable. “After thirty seconds they wonder why we’re still here.”¹² Whether you agree with Jason’s views or not, this is still a good rule of thumb. By trying to keep clips less than thirty seconds long it forces you to decide which are the important parts of the clip, which can make it easier to cut parts of a clip that you do not need.

One concept we came across when editing was the idea of disregarding the order of clips. If Brian said something late in the interview that fit well before something he said at the beginning we did not worry about the fact that we were changing the order of things. Do not be afraid to move things around so that the footage makes more sense. The only issue to be aware of when doing this is that you can often put words into someone’s mouth. This was another point that Jason emphasized by saying “It is very possible to make anyone, say anything in any manner you choose.”¹³

Finally, find a piece of software that you are comfortable with and practice using it as much as possible. We began using Apple iMovie HD for the first half of the project. For the practice interviews that we used at the beginning of the term iMovie fit most of our needs. We were able to edit clips, add text and title cards and add background audio. After meeting with Jason Scott and seeing some of the software that he used and what he was able to accomplish we started to feel like there was a lot that iMovie was missing. Unfortunately, there were no other programs that we were familiar with or that we could afford. Take the time to explore different editing software when you begin editing the practice interviews. If you do not have editing software of your own the Movie Lab in George C. Gordon Library has Adobe Premier Pro which works with the cameras that the ATC lends out. They also offer a training course in how to use the software.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

7. Tips for Future Projects

After completing the project there are a couple of lessons we learned. The biggest lesson we learned was that audio matters. As we learned from Jason Scott, poor video can easily be covered by using B-line footage but poor audio quality cannot be covered up. When we first did our practice interviews we only used the on-board camera microphone. This led to background audio being picked up as well as the interviewer's questions being caught on camera when it did not need to be. The previous year's IQP had a similar issue in that some of the Ralph Baer interview took place in his basement that had a lot of background noise. The best way to avoid audio problems is to get a lapel microphone that clips onto your subject's shirt. The lapel microphone picks up audio much more clearly from the subject and helps to eliminate background sounds.

Another issue that we ran into in many of our test interviews was a lack of lighting. Without good lighting you can often lose half of your subject due to poor lighting. If the entire interview is poorly lit, no amount of B-line footage can salvage what is left. When going to interview your subject it is a good idea to bring extra lighting just in case, even if you only have a few desk lamps. We found that the general rule of thumb was to add more light than you think is necessary. When trying to add enough light it helps to take some test footage and play it back on a T.V. because the camera LCD does not always produce the same footage.

Practice interviewing each other and friends as much as possible. Many of our practice interviews only lasted twenty minutes at most. Once it was time to interview our subject it felt like a much larger task because we had not prepared for it. When doing practice interviews, interview for longer than the advisor asks for to get the extra practice. Also avoid planning too many questions in

advanced, being able to ask questions based on how your subject answers can help during your final interview.

Along the same lines you should practice editing often as well. Editing footage can take a considerable amount of time. Knowing what program you are going to use and how to use it most effectively will help a lot in the end. There are a number of different editing programs available and it can be hard to settle on a given one. Using the first term to explore the different options and to become comfortable with the software will pay off dividends in the end. This goes for operating systems as well. If different group members use different operating systems decide how you plan to transfer footage and other files between the systems.

Contact Jason Scott early in the project. No matter how many practice interviews you do, you can't match the wisdom of someone that has been doing it for years. Jason has a lot of valuable information to share and the sooner you are able to meet with him the sooner you can practice it. We were not able to meet with him until after we conducted almost all of our test interviews so we did not have time to practice some of the advice he gave us.

Keep multiple backups of all your interview footage. When we filmed our practice interviews and our final interview we used the mini-DV video cameras. These cameras recorded information onto small tapes. This is highly recommended because if anything happens to the footage on your computer you can still use the mini-DV tapes to retrieve the raw video. It is also important to make sure you constantly back your edited video up in multiple locations. In the final week of our project we had a hard drive fail and it almost cost us our project. We were able to recover the data but if we had kept more backup copies of our project files it would have saved us a lot of time and effort that went into the recovery process.

Finally make sure you find out who your subject is early. Not knowing who our subject was until the end of the first term set us back. We had less time to research our subject which impacted the questions we asked and the information we had. Even if you do not have your subject known from the start it would help to research the general timeline for videogame history. Having a basic knowledge of what else was going on at the time can put your subjects work into perspective as well as give other information to ask about.

8. Conclusion

There were many bumps along the road to the completion of the project most of which we were able to overcome. While the project time-line was not set up the way we had expected we feel that this was a more effective use of the time we had. Conducting weekly practice interviews was immensely helpful in helping us become more acquainted with the camera equipment. Not only did we become more familiar with the camera itself but we also became more proficient at being able to connect the camera to a computer so that we could easily access our footage.

One of the main parts of the timeline that we feel should be changed is when we met with Jason Scott. While Jason went out of his way to meet with us being able to meet with him earlier in the project's life cycle would have been helpful. We were unable to meet with Jason until the end of our first term at which point we had already conducted and edited our practice interviews. This gave us something to show Jason so that we could get his feedback which was helpful for editing our final interview. While it was helpful for our final project we did not have much time to practice any of the other techniques that Jason imparted on us. I feel like his knowledge would have been better utilized if we met with him after our first or second round of practice interviews. This way there would still be footage for Jason to critique but we also would have enough time to practice what we learned after meeting him.

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**Appendix A: Practice Interviews, Jason Scott's Edited Footage of
Dennis**

Appendix B: Edited Interview with Brian Moriarty