

Will Wright to leave Electronic Arts

April 8 2009, By BARBARA ORTUTAY , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- Will Wright, the video game designer behind such hits as "The Sims" and "Spore," is leaving game publisher Electronic Arts Inc. after 12 years.

Redwood City, Calif.-based [Electronic Arts](#) said Wednesday that Wright is departing to run Stupid Fun Club, a company Wright started in 2001 to develop new forms of entertainment like video games, movies and even toys.

"The entertainment industry is moving rapidly into an era of revolutionary change," Wright said in a statement. "Stupid Fun Club will explore new possibilities that are emerging from this sublime chaos and create new forms of entertainment on a variety of platforms."

Electronic Arts is making an equity investment in Stupid Fun Club, though EA did not say how much. Wright and EA own equal percentages and are the main shareholders.

Wright, 49, co-founded Maxis Software in 1989, and Electronic Arts bought it eight years later. He is behind some of the game company's biggest hits, most notably "The Sims," hailed as the best-selling PC game of all time, with more than 100 million units sold around the world.

But EA has been struggling lately and recently cut 1,000 jobs. The company, said Lazard Capital Markets analyst Colin Sebastian, has been very focused on controlling costs, so the latest news reflects EA's direction.

Sebastian called Wright a very talented developer, but noted that his games tend to take a long time to create. He estimates that "Spore," which took several years, cost somewhere between \$30 million and \$40 million.

"Spore," launched last fall, is an extremely ambitious game that lets players create an evolving universe, from single-celled organisms to civilizations capable of intergalactic travel. The game has sold 2 million copies so far, which might make it somewhat of a disappointment to EA, noted Sebastian, though he added that the company also has a long-term view of the franchise.

The arrangement with Wright frees EA from putting a lot of financial resources behind him but lets the company share in the benefits of whatever Stupid Fun Club may produce. EA will hold rights to develop games that come from the company. It also frees up Wright to pursue his interests beyond just video games.

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