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Title: "M" rated video games left out of exhibit

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From the Sun Times **'M' rated video games left out of exhibit**

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BY ANDREW HERRMANN Staff Reporter

A new video game exhibit from Europe opened Friday at the Museum of Science and Industry. But, for its stop in Illinois, where Gov. Blagojevich has complained about video violence, all of the games rated "M" -- Mature -- have been removed.

Museum official John Beckman said a handful of original exhibits that allowed sampling of M-rated games such as "Grand Theft Auto" and "Doom" were rejected.

Overseas, the exhibit, called Game On, "played at different kinds of venues -- art museums, rented halls, empty train stations. It hasn't played at a family setting like ours," Beckman said.

Game On covers the growth of video games from 1962, when "Spacewar!" was created, to today. Visitors to the show can play more than 100 actual games.

Beckman, manager of temporary exhibits for the museum, said he and a team of curators sampled the original exhibit games for content before Blagojevich made national news by ripping video games last December. Blagojevich's comments, however, "certainly brought it into focus somewhat."

Questionable content

Blagojevich has called for making Illinois the first state in the nation to prohibit selling and renting excessively violent and sexually explicit video games to children. Similar efforts have been ruled unconstitutional in other states. Blagojevich's proposal could be heard in committee in Springfield next week.

In addition to the M games excised, the museum also rejected "Golden Eye," a game rated T for teenagers, because of its questionable content, Beckman said.

Game On might not include M games -- estimated by the Entertainment Software Rating Board to be about 12 percent of the new market in 2004 -- but it doesn't ignore the controversy. One section covers the rating system and offers handouts on what the ratings mean.

Conrad Boodman, the original curator of the exhibit that opened overseas in 2001, said the museum made the correct call.

"There's always going to be strong content in any kind of art form, whether it's literature or film or music or whatever," Boodman said.

However, "we want families to come together, and we didn't want to hive off one part of the show in one room and have the rest of it in another," he said.