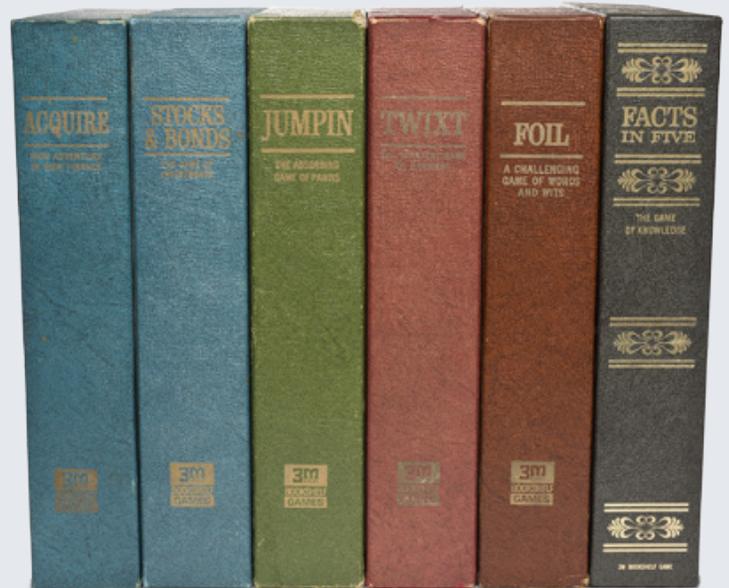


3M Bookshelf Game Series

3M IS A GIANT AMONG MINNESOTA BUSINESSES. Known for its research and development, the company has produced items ranging from sandpaper to Scotch tape—and countless others in between—since it began as a mining venture in 1902. One of its lesser-known product areas was launched as an outgrowth of the Consumer Products Group, Retail Tape and Gift Wrap Division: in 1962, 3M published its first board games.

Having determined that the boxed-game market was on the rise, 3M opted to develop a line of board games for a new audience: adults. The company targeted that market by producing strategic games, in which the outcome was determined by reason, rather than games of chance, in which outcomes are more random. Development began with ideas submitted by inventors of all kinds, from well-known game designers to 3M employees. The company received hundreds of submissions every year.

Each game was evaluated by 3M staff and, if accepted, screened by college students and family panels before being test-marketed and only then going into production.



The series and its popular game, *Acquire* (below), in its original 1964 form (JASON ONERHEIM/MNHS COLLECTIONS)

The first games came in various box sizes. Eventually, 3M settled on a standard-size box (8½ × 12 × 2¼ inches), designed to stand upright, with a slipcover reminiscent of a leather-bound book—hence the name “bookshelf games.” The bookshelf series was published from 1962 to 1976 when, following declining profits, 3M sold the line to Avalon Hill. In 1998 Avalon Hill was dissolved and purchased by toy-and-game giant Hasbro.

One product that survived both sales of the line was *Acquire*, a stock market game in which players control the growth of companies on the board and race to amass the greatest wealth. Professional game developer Sid Sackson submitted his design and worked with Bill Caruson, sales manager for 3M bookshelf games, for about a year to shape *Acquire* into its published state. It was an immediate success, and fans continue to tout its impact on the strategy-game market.

3M Company’s historical corporate records are available through the Gale Family Library at the Minnesota History Center. To see *Acquire* and more from MNHS collections, go to Collections Online at: collections.mnhs.org/cms

—Sondra Reiersen, associate curator,
collections department



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