



## Players' Guide to

# MEGATRAVELLER

Role-Playing in the Shattered Imperium

*Basic information about the  
MegaTraveller role-playing game system.*

"The fact that the Imperium was the largest, the strongest, and the single most dominant force in interstellar politics for more than a thousand years misled even its most vocal detractors. Critics talked about change rather than revolution. Dissidents talked about escape rather than change.

"Five hundred years of stable interstellar government produced an understandable complacency on the part of every member of the Imperial nobility. Every noble had a vested interest in maintaining the status quo; it was the source of their power and their fortunes.

"Imperial succession had been a smooth process for centuries. When Dulinor's bullets killed not only the emperor but also his immediate heirs, they created a turmoil that would ripple throughout the galaxy.

"Every noble could be counted on to support the obvious choice, if there was one, but when there is no obvious choice; each noble supported a successor based on his own conscience, and there are as many consciences as there are souls in the universe.

"Traditionally, honor and enlightened self-interest held the Imperium together. Nobles could be depended on to be conservative; to decide for the status quo. But what decisions could they make when there was no clear status quo?

"The Imperial court supported Lucan. More sensitive nobles, believing the charges that Lucan had killed his own brother in order to become the leading contender for the throne, chose to support the less controversial Margaret. Nobles in Ilesh supported Dulinor. Solomani nobles decided the time was ripe to support their homeland. Nobles on the fringes found their territories were not a priority when compared with the factional infighting; they were soon forced to abandon the Imperium in order to survive. Others found they preferred to be big fish in little ponds rather than small fish in an Imperial ocean.

"The very forces that pulled the stable Imperium together now pulled the shattered Imperium apart."

—Norris Aella Aledon

*The Last Days of the Imperium,*

Imperial Books (Second edition, Regina: 1146).



The Imperium's thousand-year-reign created an illusion of strength and lasting power, but continued expansion and internal pressures have strained its ability to govern to the very limit. The only thing that held the vast interstellar empire together was the person of the emperor: the one individual to whom all imperial citizens ultimately owed their loyalty.

Now the emperor is dead. He has no immediate heirs. His assassin claims the throne by an obscure and obsolete right. His nephew claims that he is the Emperor's rightful successor. The Moot demands a say in naming a new emperor. The Solomani demand independence. The Vargr have invaded several frontier provinces. Aslan *ihatei* are nibbling at a few distant subsectors. And the Imperium is crumbling.

The Imperium was held together, before the Emperor's death, by a web of personal oaths and loyalties. Hereditary nobles held their offices directly from the emperor; new appointees hold their offices as rewards for contributions or good work. Potentially disloyal citizens were often granted nobility and co-opted into support of the empire. All nobles had a vested interest in supporting the Imperium. But which side do they choose when no faction is clearly right, or clearly winning? Their choices were dictated by their other loyalties: most often dividing the nobles at the expense of the Imperium.

At the same time, signs of weakness within the Imperium enticed outsiders to attack, conquer, and pillage. The famous Corridor Fleet was transferred to the Core, and Vargr raiders moved into the void it left; the entire Spinward Marches territory was cut off from the central Imperium. Imperial task forces were withdrawn from the Trojan Reach to fight the invading Vargr, and Aslan *ihatei* conquered undefended worlds on the Marches' frontier. Imperial fleets along the Solomani border moved back to a more defensible line, and the Solomani gobbled up whole sectors at the first opportunity. Unrest and Vargr incursions in Vland sector forced three megacorporations there to re-establish the Vilani Empire, with its merchant socialism, if only to protect their markets. The League of Antares found their portion of the Imperium unprotected against raiding Vargr, and seceded to become a client state of a more protective border empire.

Within the Imperium the population was not faced with clear choices. Loyalists supported a new emperor, but its various factions could not agree on which of several heirs had priority. The Pretenders supported Emperor Strephon's killer, accepting that ascending the throne by right of assassination was a

legitimate, if seldom used, precedent. Federalists supported a change to the federation form of government. And many citizens preferred to keep quiet, wishing that the old days were back.

**POINTS OF INTEREST**

There are several points of interest in the current situation.

**Advance Knowledge:** Though current technology in the Imperium allows jump 6 travel, the standard means of ferrying information, the xboats, only travel at jump 4. Publicly, the Imperium writes this discrepancy off, citing the high cost of building new ships and the fact that many frontier routes simply do not need jump 6 service. The cost of jump 6 is high enough to make a universal jump 6 xboat network inefficient. But the Imperial government also knows the power of information, and maintains a variety of naval couriers which can make jump 6. Knowing vital facts before they become general knowledge is essential to a well-run bureaucracy.

When Strephon was assassinated on 132-1116, the word went out immediately by both naval courier and the standard news services. The following table shows the increasing discrepancy between the advance word and the official news:

Assassination	132 1116	132-1116	Note that Dulinor announced the news locally in Dlan 245-1116.
World	Advance Word (J 6)	Official News (J 4)	
Vland	202 1116	237 1116	The further from the event, the greater the discrepancy between the advance word and the official news reports. As an example, at Regina, there was over one hundred days between the time the government and nobles knew about the Emperor's assassination and the time the official news reports were broadcast to the public. This gave the nobles one hundred days to prepare themselves, possibly to sway public opinion, and
Dlan	244 1116	300 1116	
Daibei	250 1116	309 1116	
Terra	311 1116	036 1117	
Regina	328 1116	067 1117	
Home	001 1117	117 1117	

to lessen the shock when the news became available to the masses.

**The Moot:** The Moot rises to a prominence it has never had before with the assassination of Strephon; it is the legislative body of the Imperium. It has few powers, and even more rarely exercises them. The Moot is theoretically composed of all nobles (baron and above) of the Imperium. It has evolved over the years into a sort of elective assembly, as those attending hold proxies for absent nobles, and vote them on matters of importance. Sitting members cast weighted votes based on the proxies they hold.

The Moot is technically supreme in the Imperium, but its power is extremely limited. Its acts are primarily advisory to the Emperor. In practice, the Moot has one power: to dissolve the Imperium --- the power to commit suicide. When this power is brought to bear, it compels compromise between opposing parties.

In the absence of an Emperor, the Moot becomes important as the validating body for the new Emperor. It has the power to examine the qualifications and credentials of the heir apparent, and in unusual situations, reject him.

**Right of Assassination:** The curious fact is that the assumption of the Imperial throne by a successful assassin traces its roots back more than 800 years. Assassination grew to be accepted as a viable way of removing an unfit, insane, or ineffective Emperor.

Certain conditions apply to such assassinations; no commoner can simply walk in, shoot the Emperor, and take over his job. The assassin must be a high-ranking noble, be prepared to defend his or her actions to the Moot, and have sufficient support in the Moot to make the claim stick. As such, assassination is a risky undertaking, since death at the hands of Imperial bodyguards or the Imperial justice system is a very real possibility.

When Martin II died in 244, he had no immediate heirs to take his place; the Moot examined the credentials of several claimants and supported Cleon Zhunastu, great-great-great grandson of Cleon II. Cleon resolved disagreements within his cabinet by shooting vocal opponents. Surviving members of the government decided it was essential to the health of the Imperium that Cleon be deposed. Porfira drew the short straw, and shot Cleon as he entered the council chamber. Partially in recognition of her efforts, she was proclaimed Empress in 245.

During a 147-year period in the chaotic fifth and sixth centuries, 11 assassinations propelled new emperors to the throne. In most cases, the new emperor personally assassinated the old one. Only with the assumption of Arbellatra in 629 did the method fall into disuse.

**The Factions:** Remember, every Imperial noble has a vested interest in maintaining the power and strength of the Imperium, which is, after all, the source of their power. Why should anyone tear down the most powerful government in the universe? But every noble in the power structure faces a unique problem in the current situation: in supporting the Imperium, who exactly does one support? There is no clear choice at present.

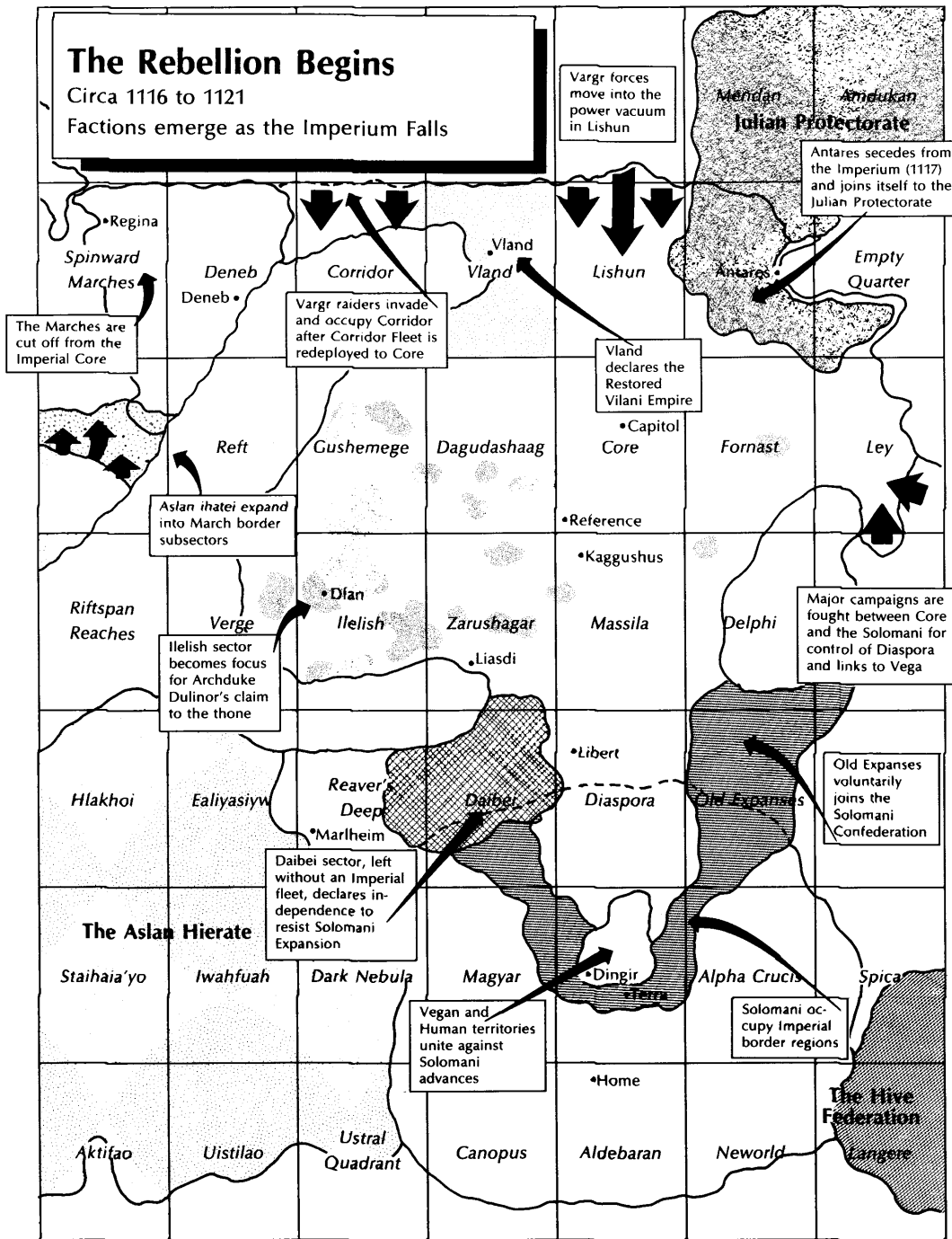
The choices each face include: the Usurper Dulinor who raises genuine criticisms of the current government, and claims the throne by time-honored right of assassination; the Pretender Lucan, already crowned Emperor, but also accused of killing his own brother on the way to the throne; the Other Pretender Margaret, seen as an easy and legitimate alternative to Lucan; the "Real" Strephon, who appeared in Usdiki/Gushemege in 1117 claiming his double was the one killed in the Palace; or even the Archduke of Deneb (the Duke of Regina), conquering hero of the Fifth Frontier War, and a loyal commander of a major group of fleets. Less powerful Imperial leaders, each ruling a significant force of starships and territories, include: Litininin of Daibei, who declared independence for his sector when the Imperium started draining it of naval strength; the Shadow Emperor of the Restored Vilani Empire; and the Regent of Antares, now aligned with the Julian Protectorate in order to resist the advances of Vargr worlds to coreward-various Vargr marauders, and even entire nations have been on the move since the civil war began.

Every noble has made his choice; every Imperial citizen will have to live with the consequences.

**THE MAP**

The map shown here depicts the approximate positions of power and resistance at this chaotic point in the struggle for dominance. Of course, friction is widespread--- virtually no part of the Imperium is free from commerce raiding or outright warfare.

The attached notes give explanations of certain important events and their locations. Detailed information is for the most part unavailable, and the average Imperial citizen is left pretty much in the dark about the wars waging around him. Actual coverage of events is often far removed and reshaped by propoganda, and the rumor mills are working full tilt. However, information on this map should be considered reliable.



## MegaTraveller Designers' Notes

**MegaTraveller** is without a doubt the largest **Traveller** project ever attempted to date. Many people had a hand in the original design and conceptualization of the game, but when push came to shove the final editing and assembly work was handed to Gary Thomas and Joe Fugate. We thought it would be nice to let them get in their two cents about what they have done, why they did it, and what you can expect to get out of it.

**MegaTraveller** is here at last! By the time you read this (we have to write it some months ahead to meet publication schedules), all three volumes of the new rules set should be available in your local game store. Was the 10 year wait worth it? If you already play **Traveller**, is this something you need? What changes were made, and why? These are all good questions, and this is our chance to give you some answers.

First, who are "we"? Marc Miller first conceived of **Traveller** 10 years ago, and along with Frank Chadwick has guided its development since that time from the bridge at Game Designers' Workshop. In that time, GDW has published more than 50 different **Traveller** books and magazines. Gary Thomas and Joe Fugate are the brains and brawn behind Digest Group Publications, publishers of *Travellers' Digest* magazine and several other approved **Traveller** books.

When **Traveller** first appeared, it was revolutionary: a powerful, playable, science-fiction role playing game with infinite expandability. A whole universe waited to be explored. At the beginning, GDW didn't publish background material for the game, but allowed referees and players to develop their own milieux. It soon became apparent, however, that the game could grow faster if more background was laid out. Not everyone has the time to invent a galaxy of worlds, inhabitants, culture, and technology.

So GDW started in. The Spinward Marches were laid out in loving detail. Aliens appeared: the proud and ferocious Aslan, the intent and mysterious Zhodani, the tradition-bound and militant K'kree, the mercurial and quick-to-take-offense Vargr, the silent and scheming Hiver, the anachronistic and quiet Droyne, the reactionary and independent-minded Solomani. Cultures flourished. Technology and commerce prospered. Far-ranging starships were designed and built. The historical underpinnings of the Third Imperium were discovered. And the first inklings of the governmental structure of the Imperium were hinted at in the system of nobility.

In this development, many hands played an important role. Besides Marc and Frank, the Keith brothers William and Andrew were instrumental in giving the game a definite flavor through their writing and art. Magazines like *Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society*, *High Passage*, *Far Traveller*, and *Travellers' Digest* came along with their contributions from many sources.

### SO MUCH FOR HISTORY

But not to belabor a point: if you've come this far in your game playing, you probably know where **Traveller** came from. The reason we mention it here is that it is important to be clear on where we are if we are to understand where we are going. Ed Edwards, former editor of *Working Passage* and one of **Traveller's** most vocal and devoted fans, says that in one sense, "Everything we have done for the last ten years has been playtesting." Now that we've had a chance to try out the game, we've encountered its kinks. We've found its strong points. And over the years, each of us has thought of how we would change the game to perfect it.

Some of the game's growth has been unpruned; different branches of the same tree have fought each other in space and stunted each other's growth. Some of the roots had reached bedrock, or withered from exposure, lacking a firm foundation.

A few years ago, Marc decided that we were approaching the time

when the game would need to be rebuilt, from the bottom up, to incorporate everything that all of us had learned over the years about role-playing in general and **Traveller** in particular.

### IN THE BEGINNING

So here we were, with a mass of material and a deep desire to make all the pieces fit without throwing any away.

A monumental task? Definitely.

An impossible task? Definitely not!

We worked hand-in-glove for the entire duration of this restructuring task, knowing that what we came up with at the end had to be greater than the sum of its parts. It had to breathe fresh life into a game that was still quite healthy but had grown flabby in a few places and had a few muscles that hadn't been exercised as much as they could be. Marc never wanted a cosmetic retouching of the game: Instead, he insisted that whatever came out of this process had to be right. If something was wrong, it was changed. If something was right it was kept. If

something needed more development, the development was done. And if something was over-inflated, it was pared down to size. We like what we came up with, and we think you will too.

### ON WITH THE TASK

One of the first decisions, one that was obvious after working with it in **Traveller** sessions for the last three years, was to include the DGP task system in the new version. The structure of the Universal Task Profile was an enhancement that gave real meaning to character skills and attributes, and it enabled referees to resolve, actions in a consistent and easy way.

Every time a task roll is attempted, no matter how trivial, there is some element of risk. This risk creates conflict (the skeleton on which any adventure is built), and success gives the characters (and their players) a sense of accomplishment that was sometimes lacking before.

You can't pick up the new MegaTraveller game rules without

encountering the task system. What does this mean to the referee and the players? Once you've learned the basics of the task system, you're well on your way to creating realistic (yet playable) dramatic situations. Your air/raft is stalled and the villains are hot on your trail? Make a task roll. The Vargr who had "befriended" you now turns against you, weapons ready? Make a task roll. The customs agent wants to have "just a closer look" at your ship's hold? Make a task roll. Your starship sensors pick up an unknown object coming at you at a high rate of speed? Make a task roll.

The simplicity and universality of the task system give it its power. After just a few minutes, a referee can have at his fingertips a way to bring any situation to life instantly. In playtests, we've found that inexperienced players are not at a disadvantage: they can have just as much fun as the "old hands" by virtue of the task system. As long as the referee understands its fundamentals, it is a tool ready for any circumstance. And players enjoy using the system: when they encounter a new situation, more often than not, they ask if some task could apply if we don't mention one first.

In fact, some of the universality of the system came from these requests. As obvious as it seems now, the task system was not originally used for combat. Then in a playtest, a newer player, who didn't know the standard **Traveller** combat rules, asked what task roll was needed to shoot at an enemy. Lightning struck! The light bulbs went on over our heads, and we realized at once that we were really on to something. As we said, you can't open the **MegaTraveller** rules without finding the task system as the thread that gives color to the whole cloth.

### GOODBYE, OLD FRIEND

One result of the increased use of tasks is the elimination of many unnecessary rules for situations that are now handled in one comprehensive way. Most of these nit-picking details were impossible to remember anyway, and looking

them up always slowed down the play of the game.

Quick now, a quiz: What's the basic roll needed to avoid a mishap with a vacc suit? And what's the die modifier for vacc suit skill in this instance? What about your air/raft? Do you remember the DMs for bad weather, being chased, and so forth, to avoid crashing the thing? Under the task system, you will never have to look these up again.

### CHARACTER GENERATION

**Traveller** revolves around its characters, those disembodied entities that carry out the players' desires in the game. Thus, changes to the character generation system were some of the most important made in **MegaTraveller**.

Advice on this point came from many sources. Some old time **Traveller** players wanted us to base character generation on the one year system (like **Mercenary** and **High Guard**) and to throw out the "regular" four year system altogether. We hesitated to do this, though, because of the added complexities (*read*: it takes a long time) to generate a character year by year.

But something needed to be done. That the systems were different was obvious. A player using the one year system had a greater degree of control over the resulting character information. Not only that, but a player using the one year system could get a lot more skills than someone using the four year system. In the context of the game, this wide diversity wasn't "fair" to those with less time, but we hated to throw out the baby with the bathwater and cause players to lose control over the identities of their game personalities.

The compromise we reached is an effective one. By adding new skills to the system and by revamping the charts with many new cascade skills (in which players choose a specific skill desired from a group of related skills), we've given the "four-year" player as many skills as the one year player had without costing him the extra game time necessary. The one year systems are still given as

"advanced" character generations. Too many players insisted that we leave them in **MegaTraveller**, and we were more than happy to fulfill this request. Where a specific one year system is not given for a particular character career, the four year system is designed in such a way as to suggest what the one year system would be like.

### SKILLS FOR ADVENTURES

One result of the new system is that characters generally have higher skill levels than before. The task system takes up this slack perfectly: its tradeoffs make the game more realistic without requiring characters to be unbelievably talented in any one realm. In those cases where characters do end up being "smarter than the average bear," we find this an advantage. After all, no one really wants to play "the fellow down the street." The reason behind the game is the search for adventure among the stars: the characters are adventurers, individuals culled out of society because they do stand out in some way.

But this system is still "unfair" because of the different degrees of experience that different characters have. A career Navy officer with 36 years under his belt will be a better pilot than the green recruit getting his first taste of a starship. Is there a way to reconcile this disparity within the structure of the game?

Certainly there is, and **MegaTraveller** accomplishes it beautifully. Again starting from the basis of the task system, characters can try their hands at things they may not be completely expert at. Over time, by way of these repeated efforts, they learn, just as "real" people would under similar circumstances. Eventually, this experience can be measured after the character's ability has reached a plateau point, and the character record is then changed to show the addition of this new skill level. In **MegaTraveller**, you can play the veteran or the recruit, and after a number of terms of game time, the recruit's skills will be similar to those "rolled up" in the veteran's character generation.

If you want to start out as an 18 year old novice, go for it! It won't be long before your character has accumulated many skills useful to a party of galactic adventurers. If your character is the academic type, he can go to college, too, and pick up skills that way. (Naturally, the more you play, the more your character will pick up skills, but we've never claimed there's anything wrong with playing **Traveller** a lot!)

### OH, GIVE ME A HOME

Another enhancement to the **MegaTraveller** character generation system is the required homeworld determination. No longer are characters faceless orphans without any roots. With the new system, the first characteristics rolled up are those of the character's homeworld.

The impetus for this addition to the rules is a desire to expand the role-playing aspects of the game. If you know where your character is from, it's easier to create a personality that seems real. Once we had decided to make this change, our playtesting helped us to discover that knowing your homeworld has much more impact on play than we realized at first.

Characters from high tech worlds, for example, live under different environments than characters from low tech worlds. We've simulated this by including lists of automatic zero level skills for characters from these worlds. Certain skills, too, are limited by their Tech Level. If your character is from a low tech world, he won't get much chance to fly an air/raft (grav vehicle skill); on the other hand, your high tech character won't ever have the chance to learn how the clutch on a standard transmission works (Ground Car skill).

Another problem that every **Traveller** player has wondered about from time to time is the effect of tech level on skills. Is a navigator from a tech level three world able to act as navigator on a tech level 15 starship? Seems doubtful, but the rules were never specific on this. **MegaTraveller** spells out the conditions under which skills can transfer between devices of various tech levels.

### FLESHING OUT THE CHARACTERISTICS

By better defining what characteristics mean, we've solved one recurring problem in the game: "I just rolled a 9 for my (fill in the blank); is that good?" Players will now have a firmer basis for knowing the abilities as well as the constraints of their characters... another change that enhances the game's role-playing aspects.

For example, the mysterious social standing is now clear and meaningful and has continuing influence on play sessions. A character with a high value has an abiding need to "keep up with the Joneses," by spending money to stay in the lifestyle he's accustomed to. In the context of the game, this means that the character has a regular cash outflow he must maintain. The result? The character needs an equally regular cash inflow, and that means adventure.

Remember the typical monthly salaries for characters given in **Traveller**? Now characters have typical monthly expenditures, too. Let's get that hold loaded up with cargo and head on to the next system. We need a good profit this month!

### YOU'RE AS YOUNG AS YOU FEEL

Anagathics medicines that reduce the effects of aging are covered in great detail in **MegaTraveller**. Characters can use these drugs both during character generation or after mustering out. In either case, anagathics are expensive and potentially dangerous to one's health. But it's entirely within the scope of the rules to have a 70 year old character with the fitness and physique of a 40 year old. (This could be a good way to build up skills....)

### PSIONICS

Task based, of course. Psionics are streamlined and made more consistent with other aspects of the game. What psionics can and can't do is clarified in the new rules. Levels of psionic skill are handled

just like a level of any other skill, and the all-powerful task system resolves any attempted use of psionics.

One interesting side effect of using tasks is that many psionic tasks are classified as "uncertain." This places these events in the proper light: psionics are no longer the super duper powers that never fail. So you've read your adversary's mind, have you? And you know what he's thinking, do you? So you're sure you can trust him, are you? All right, it's your neck.

### ALL DRESSED UP AND NO PLACE TO GO

World generation has always been an important feature of **Traveller**. You begin with a basic star system then go as long as you want. Create a major world for the system. Add other worlds if you want. Satellites? Just keep going. The beauty of the system is that you can stop wherever it's most appropriate. Sometimes players don't need that much detail, and in those cases the new system can save the referee's time. (The new system incorporates all of the original system, most of Book 6: **Scouts**, and a smidgen of **Grand Survey**.)

The new Universal World Profile listing standard also gives you more information than you had before. It now includes the population multiplier, the number of gas giants in the system, and the number of planetoid belts.

### MINOR DISAGREEMENTS

The combat systems in **Traveller** (and in other role-playing games) vary considerably in their techniques and effectiveness. At one point, GDW started to develop an advanced combat system for **Traveller** in order to consolidate and simplify the systems then in use for the game.

Some minor work on this concept was begun, but before it could bear fruit, the **MegaTraveller** project had already started, so GDW decided at that time to incorporate the advanced combat system into **MegaTraveller** along with whatever



enhancements or modifications the new rules set required.

Surprise, surprise! Combat in **MegaTraveller** is task-based. Players pick up on the risks associated with tasks quite readily, and this basic knowledge of game mechanics carries right over to combat resolution. Should I stick around and fight? Or should I strap on my grav belt and head for the hills? Decisions like these are made easier by the consistent nature of the task system. A player already understands the different difficulties a task might entail, so he can better assess the risks involved in any combat decision he makes.

The new combat system is improved in other ways, too. In some games, dice are king, and they reign as long as they can. "Let's see, this fellow is about to shoot his laser pistol at you .... Let me check the result." And only 16 dice rolls later, the referee has determined that the draw was successful. "Now let's see if he's aiming at you .....

Excessive dice rolling is tedious; it drags the game down at a point when it should be the most exciting. The **MegaTraveller** combat system is also derived from our "fast combat" system, a **Traveller** variant used for years of playtesting in extended campaigns. This means that results are known almost instantly, with a minimum of dice rolling or paperwork.

One way combat is speeded up is by deferring the detailed determination of damage until the end of the combat session. If someone's drawing a bead on you with his FGMP-15, and you're lucky enough to get your shot off first, you don't really care whether your slug hit him in the thigh, the kidney, or the neck. What you want to know is whether he's still standing and whether he's still got you in his sights. Once things have settled down, then you can take the time to check on his medical condition.

The new combat rules also incorporate "interrupts." Interrupts mean that characters can "jump into the action," pre-empting another NPC or PC by acting first. In the game, the result of this interrupt is

heightened attention from all the players. In some systems, while the referee and a single player spent time resolving one interaction, the rest of the group could go out for pizza without missing any of the events, thinking, "That doesn't affect me, does it?" However, it does affect you in **MegaTraveller**: you always have a chance to change the course of events by taking direct action. But again, there's conflict. If you interrupt too soon, your action may be wasted. If you wait too long....

### GET THE BIG PICTURE

One advantage to the **MegaTraveller** combat system is that there is only one **MegaTraveller** combat system. Whether you're attacked by a groat, a thug with a cudgel, a Vargr with a laser carbine, or a system defense boat with a meson gun, the system is the same. Do you really want to shoot at that armored starship with a bow and wooden arrows? OK, it's up to you (personally, we think you'd have to be nuts), but with the new system you can do it and find out how much damage was done. (Hint: absolutely none at all! Has anybody got a bottle of starship touch-up paint handy?)

### MAYBE

#### WE CAN WORK THIS OUT

Not every character interaction ends in combat, of course. In **MegaTraveller**, five types of interpersonal tasks allow characters to use their skills to negotiate and resolve conflicts without coming to blows. Want to pump someone for information in a conversation? Make a task roll. Want to bribe an Imperial official? Make a task roll. Want to agree on a fair price for your ship's cargo? Make a task roll. (By now, you should be getting the picture: everything in **MegaTraveller** revolves around the task system.)

The reaction table now shows the degree of cooperation over the long term, rather than some immediate inner emotion felt by the NPC. We used to hate rolling "hostile": if you stop someone on the street to ask directions, are you assaulted? Probably not, but you might not get a straight answer, either. The new

interpersonal interaction system allows a wider spectrum of meaningful responses in the game.

### WE'VE GOT TO STOP MEETING LIKE THIS....

The encounter system in **MegaTraveller**, like most other systems in the revision, is integrated: one set of charts does all the work for the referee. Animal encounters, patron encounters, NPC encounters, starship encounters, pre-determined adventure encounters, rumors, all are resolved in one consistent system. The headache of trying to remember six different sets of rules is thus eliminated, as well as the problem of remembering when to roll which number of dice for which type of encounter.

### CRAFT DESIGN

It would seem pointless to keep the "**Traveller**" name unless there were plenty of opportunities for characters to actually travel. We needed systems that would allow designing craft of any and all sizes, from the very smallest all the way up to the largest.

For small vehicles, we used **Striker** as a jumping off point. This system, developed by Frank Chadwick, was remarkable in that it allowed the designer to use one set of rules for the whole gamut of tech levels. At the same time, we wanted to cut down on some of the **Striker** complexity and ensure that the vehicle design system and the starship design system did not contradict each other.

As work progressed on the two systems, we realized how powerful this concept of non-contradiction was. It didn't take long to start linking small vehicles, small craft, and starships into one integrated craft design system. Now, using the same set of rules, you can design almost any vehicle imaginable, all the way from your grandfather's Model T clear up to a 100,000 ton tech level 15 battle cruiser. (Pitting the two against each other is still an unfair fight, however.)

One significant addition to starship design is ship sensors, many of which were borrowed from

DGP's **Grand Survey** and **Grand Census** (which in turn owed their beginnings to Marc Miller's *Special Supplement 3: Missiles*). Once starships have "real" sensors, the fun is just beginning.

#### **NOSE-TO-NOSE, TURRET-TO-TURRET**

Starship combat in **Traveller** has benefited greatly from the new rules. At once more realistic, easier to learn, and easier to run, it owes much of its procedure to the **MegaTraveller** personal combat system. Once you've learned one system, the second follows along the same basic lines.

The starship combat hit resolution is a, yep, you guessed it, task-based version of **High Guard**. Another difference between the two is the use of starship sensors just mentioned. Under the old system, any ship "within range" was a possible target. Under **MegaTraveller**, you have to determine what the ship is first. Is it a Vargr corsair? Or a friendly vessel maintaining radio silence during the battle? You better know for sure before firing. Besides, you're aiming your weapons with the dual assistance of your sensors and your computer; now don't you wish you'd gone ahead and installed that Model 9?

With the necessity of sensors, there's a lot more possibility of skullduggery and deception. Power down your fusion plant, and your enemy's sensors show that your vessel is an insignificant target. But if your enemy isn't fooled, you could end up a sitting duck. On the other hand, what about that clump of space debris you just whizzed by? Maybe it deserves a closer look.

#### **BUYING AND SELLING**

Money makes the world go 'round, so they say, and we're dealing here with 11,000 worlds. Commerce rules in **MegaTraveller** were adapted from **Merchant Prince**, with the addition of detailed cargo rules. Now you know whether your cargo hold is filled with laser rifles or vacc suits. (We can certainly think of a scenario in which this would make a difference.) Special rules for

hazardous cargoes also serve to spice up an adventure; you wouldn't mind the firefight between your ship and that corsair if it weren't for the fact that your hold is loaded with potentially explosive petrochemicals.

Dealing with the day-to-day details of interstellar trade is also unified by means of the task system and the use of character skills.

#### **YOU CAN ALWAYS LOOK IT UP**

Ten years of role-playing taught us one thing: Players want background material, even if they sometimes exercise the option of modifying that material for their own campaigns.

To this end, **MegaTraveller** has much more background material than the original **Traveller** had (which was minimal, at best). The third book of the **MegaTraveller** set is the **Imperial Encyclopedia**, which is completely filled with library data, several maps, exhaustive lists of equipment, armor and weapons, a catalog of starships and vehicles, and a few details on starship operation.

In developing the background, Marc wanted to provide more opportunities for adventure than currently exist in the Third Imperium, so changes were in order. But Marc insisted that these changes be implemented in a peaceable manner: things had to be "upward compatible," so we couldn't go back in time or otherwise change the written history.

To create a new scenario, then, we had to move forward in time about 10 years allowing some radical shifts in the political makeup of the regions contained in and around the Third Imperium. Emperor Strephon is dead, shot down in cold blood by an archduke who then claims the throne by an ancient right. In the ensuing confusion, big chunks of the Imperium start breaking off, and Aslan and Vargr on the border start encroaching. (If you've read the articles in the last two issues of **Challenge Magazine**, you already know about this.)

These border spats (and they exist throughout the whole region, because there are lots more borders) are dangerous to anyone

travelling in the area, and danger spells adventure. Anywhere you go, you might find warships, corsairs, petty thieves, and a general state of lawlessness.

#### **LIBRARY DATA**

In some respects, this third volume was the hardest to write, even though it had no new rules *per se*. We collected the background from the entire corpus of **Traveller** books and magazines and then summarized this into library data.

But not your ordinary library data: the **Imperial Encyclopedia** has library data with a twist. In order to further develop the background for **MegaTraveller**, we give one version of library data and specify the version. According to this scenario, the information collected was part of a project instituted by Archduke Norris of Deneb. Naturally, this funding source brought about certain biases in the library data. Of course, it's still complete and accurate. Well... comprehensive, at least, and reasonably correct. Oh, forget it: some of the library data entries that "should" be there are missing, and others are just plain wrong.

Now, you know that, and we know that, but do your characters know that? Some do, some don't (in doubt as to which is which? That's right, make a task roll). But those who believe everything they're told might be in for some nasty surprises later on. We can say this: the library data collectively is at least as accurate as the books, taken as a whole, in your own local library. Is that reassuring or what?

(A special section for the referee's eyes only fills in some of the gaps, but players should resist the temptation to peek.)

#### **EQUIPMENT, WEAPONS, AND ARMOR**

The third volume of the **MegaTraveller** rulebooks contains a complete listing of handy gadgets. We combed through everything in print for **Traveller** and included almost all of the equipment for this revision. The handy part about this list is nearly everything is in one place: from books, magazines,

adventures, alien modules, you name it. And everything fits together well in one standard tech level progression. In the original system, there was no laser pistol; in the new system, there are two different versions at several different tech levels.

#### **CRAFT DESIGN EXAMPLES**

The **Imperial Encyclopedia** contains craft designs, each with the new Universal Craft Profile listing. In one place, this listing gives you a complete rundown of the craft's operational status.

We included small vehicles like the air/raft and ground car, small craft like the GCarrier and the ship's boat, and full-fledged starships like the Scout/courier and the system defense boat. Space was at a premium here, but we were able to squeeze in all the vehicles from the basic **Traveller** book.

#### **MISCELLANY AND POTPOURRI**

Taking advantage of 10 years of **Traveller** experience, the new rules are much more comprehensive. Your character wants to jump off a ledge? It's in there. Throw a rock across a chasm to hit that pesky K'kree in the snout? It's in there. Throw that same rock across the same chasm, but on a.125 gravity world? That's in there too. What's it

take to power up your starship when you want to blast out of port in a hurry? It's in there. Want to use your communicator to call down fire from your orbiting starship? It's in there. Want to put on a tech level 15 false moustache to sneak past the guard? It's in there.

#### **SOME FINAL THOUGHTS**

We all love **Traveller**, or we sure wouldn't have agreed ahead of time to work on a project that would take such big pieces of our lives to complete. But we recognized its weaknesses, and we had good ideas to change the game for the better by incorporating 10 years of "playtesting" the original system.

We wanted the new game to better simulate the "reality" of science-fiction. We wanted the new game to have more detail, yet be more playable. And we wanted the whole shebang to fit in with what has been done previously in **Traveller**.

Conversely, there are some differences between the old and new systems, but we made these changes only when we decided that the change was necessary to bring about the greatest improvement. We weren't afraid of complexity, either. While much of the game mechanics are streamlined and simplified (thanks mostly to the task system), a few aspects are more detailed in

order to heighten the sense of "being there." The complexity came about because of the comprehensiveness of the new game: simply stated, you have many more options to choose from in the **MegaTraveller** rules.

This myriad of choices, though, was made easy to handle by focusing our efforts. We knew that if we added to the game indiscriminately, the wealth of detail would overpower both players and referees alike, giving a "realistic" system that would not be any fun. **MegaTraveller** has the best of both worlds.

In appearance, the three volumes of **MegaTraveller** are meant to be enjoyed. No one enjoys flipping through rulebooks to find some obscure reference (and we think we've eliminated the need for that), but even if you did we think you would enjoy the graphic presentation.

The books contain small vignettes scattered through them: small "sketches" of a few paragraphs that give the reader a better look at some aspect of the **Traveller** universe.

All three books went way over their "expected" size; for the most part, we bit the bullet and included the extra material.

#### **THE BALL'S IN YOUR COURT**

**MegaTraveller** is on its way to your dealer's shelves. Take a look at it and let us know what you think. This game is yours; we need feedback so we can start preparing the next 10 year revision.



**Canon.** noun. A body of rules or principles generally accepted as authoritative and fundamental in a field or art or philosophy: for example, "the neoclassical canon"; "canons of polite society."

## THE MEGATRAVELLER CANON

**MegaTraveller** books and sourcebooks published by Game Designers' Workshop are the "official" texts (the canon) for the **MegaTraveller** science-fiction role-playing game. The canon includes all of the rules, adventures, and sourcebooks published by Game Designers' Workshop, either directly or through **Challenge** Magazine.

Because of the Digest Group Publications' participation in the design of **MegaTraveller**, their designers had a deep and abiding understanding of the rules, and DGP focused much of its energy on the publication of **MegaTraveller** materials under their license. The DGP material is classified as apocryphal: that is, authoritative, but not fully official (and thus not listed here). Apocryphal materials include the entire run of **The Travellers' Digest** and **The MegaTraveller Journal** (four issues).

	Title	Rating	Max	Min	Print Run	Date
The published <b>MegaTraveller</b> modules were evaluated in a survey of 52 players and owners who were asked to rate each module on a scale from 1 to 9 (9 is best). No specific criteria were specified; the assumed criteria being "general satisfaction."	MegaTraveller Boxed Set*	7.95	9.0	4.0	26642	1987
	Players Manual	8.00	9.0	4.0	8790	1987
	Referee's Manual	7.57	9.0	1.0	9540	1987
	Imperial Encyclopedia	7.48	9.0	5.0	9567	1987
	Referee's Companion	7.35	8.0	1.0	15524	1988
	Rebellion Sourcebook	7.52	9.0	4.0	20175	1988
	COACC	5.52	9.0	3.0	8295	1989
	Fighting Ships	3.40	8.0	3.0	10000	1990
	Knightfall	6.76	9.0	1.0	5000	1990
	Hard Times	7.05	6.0	1.0	5000	1991
	Assignment Vigilante	6.95	9.0	1.0	5000	1992
	Arrival Vengeance	7.65	9.0	4.0	5500	1992
	Astrogator's Guide	6.06	9.0	1.0	5000	1992
Average Rating	6.89	8.4	4.1			

\***MegaTraveller** Boxed set includes one each of **Players' Handbook**, **Referee's Handbook**, and **Imperial Encyclopedia**, plus the Map of the Spinward Marches.

**THE MEGATRAVELLER BOOKS AND SOURCEBOOKS**

**MegaTraveller** is set against a background of star-spanning rebellion and emerging splinter empires. Its role-playing game rules provide an entire universe to be explored. Players can assume any role and undertake any mission in the universe of the future.

**Traveller** postulates that mankind has conquered the stars and that travel from one stellar system to another is commonplace. However, the tremendous distances involved dictate that interstellar voyages can take weeks, months, sometimes years.

In many ways, the situation is similar to Earth in the 18th century. Communication is limited by the speed of travel, setting the stage for adventure in a grand fashion with all the trappings of classic science fiction: star-spanning empires, huge starfleets, wily interstellar merchants (and equally wily interstellar pirates), complex diplomatic maneuvers, and larger-than-life heroes, heroines, and villains.

Traveller is the name of the overall game. **MegaTraveller** is the name of this rules set, and is used to differentiate it from the 10 years of development and earlier editions that preceded it.



**PLAYER'S MANUAL**  
*The Player's Resource*



**REFEREE'S MANUAL**  
*The Game Master's Resource*



**IMPERIAL ENCYCLOPEDIA**  
*Details of the Universe*

- The thrilling new environment for **Traveller**—the Shattered Imperium.
- State-of-the-art role-playing rules and background materials.
- RPGA and SIGMA Award winner.

The vast star-spanning Imperium has ruled for more than 1000 years, straining to guard its borders and keep the peace. Now, powerful forces are tearing the empire apart; rival forces are competing for the throne, and there is no clear winner in sight. The Rebellion is sweeping the empire.

**MegaTraveller** is a complete science-fiction role-playing game, based on three basic rule books:

The **MegaTraveller Players' Manual** contains the basic information any player needs to prepare for and participate in Traveller situations, scenarios, and adventures. Intended as a reference for every participant, it includes character generation, enhanced character generation, skills, task resolution, experience, personal combat, and psionics.

The **MegaTraveller Referee's Manual** is a basic reference for the referee who expands on the topic of tasks, and deals in depth with vehicle design and combat (including both surface vehicles and starships, worlds, and commerce).

The **MegaTraveller Imperial Encyclopedia** is the basic reference for every **Traveller** participant. It deals with library data, maps, world data, and equipment. The Encyclopedia includes all of the raw information necessary to learn about the Shattered Imperium and role play within it.

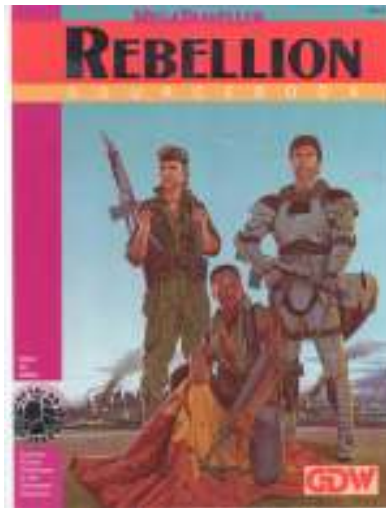
The boxed **MegaTraveller** set includes all three of these books, plus a poster-size map of the Spinward Marches. Each book is also available separately.

**REFEREE'S COMPANION**

*Additional rules  
for MegaTraveller campaigns.*

Expand the universe of **MegaTraveller** with more rules, background, information, and materials for the dedicated referee. Materials that simply wouldn't fit into the grand, three-volume **MegaTraveller** rules set have now been brought together into this compilation.

**MegaTraveller Referee's Companion** covers all the major alien races in the **Traveller** universe, dealing with each one's homeworld, physical appearance and abilities, mental make-up, and interstellar territories. The **Referee's Companion** also covers large-scale combat, timekeeping, communications, in-system operations, research, mapping, megacorporations, technology, and robots for **MegaTraveller**.

**REBELLION SOURCEBOOK**

*The battles for the Imperium  
have begun!*

You can join the Rebellion and shape the course of Imperial history! The Emperor is dead! Who will win the Iridium Throne? Many different factions have squared off in the impending struggle for ultimate power.

**Rebellion Sourcebook** covers the diverse factions of the Rebellion, their equipment, their goals and strategies, and (most of all) how players can get involved in the grandest adventures the stars have ever seen.

Includes the short adventure: "Nail Mission."



**FIGHTING SHIPS  
OF THE SHATTERED IMPERIUM**  
*Starships of the Rebellion*

The Imperial Navy never planned for the worst of all possible contingencies: a far-flung Rebellion that would shatter the empire into squabbling factions, each with its own portion of the Navy's fighting strength.

**Fighting Ships** is a compendium of immense battleships and cruisers that served with the Imperial fleet and now serve with the fleets of the many factions of the Rebellion. Includes 58 ship types, including battleships and dreadnaughts, cruisers, carriers, escorts, and auxiliaries.

**COACC**

*Close Orbit and  
Airspace Control Command.*

The army controls the ground!  
The navy controls space!  
But the interface between the two  
belongs to COACC — the fliers.  
Aircraft of all types — jets, props,  
helicopters, dirigibles — come under  
the Close Orbit and Airspace  
Command.

**MegaTraveller COACC** provides  
rules for fliers in the **Traveller**  
universe. Coverage includes  
character generation, **COACC**  
organization, aircraft design  
sequences, example aircraft, and  
air-to-air combat rules.

**KNIGHTFALL**

*The Legacy of the Long Night*

It was just a routine trade  
expedition in Massilia sector.  
But suddenly the tides of war  
shifted, and Emperor Lucan's  
forces overran the world. Now,  
the characters are prisoners of  
war, and their ship has been  
confiscated. They must escape  
and track down their stolen  
starship. During the search, they  
stumble on secrets that could  
put an end to this cursed  
Rebellion once and for all.

The search for their starship  
takes them to an Imperial knight  
with information about a fabled  
lost city of technological  
wonders from the Long Night  
period. If he can find it, its  
marvelously high technology  
could help Margaret's faction  
prevail in the Rebellion.

**ARRIVAL VENGEANCE**

*A Top Secret Mission*

In 1123, Archduke Norris, ever  
faithful to the Imperial ideal, ordered  
a top-secret mission. A borrowed  
100-year old cruiser from the  
mothball fleet is assigned a hand  
picked crew for a three-year  
mission.

**The Ship:** ISS Arrival Vengeance,  
a 60,000 ton **Azhanti-High  
Lightning** class cruiser.

**The Course:** Cross the Great Rift  
to Daibe, run trailing to Delphi, then  
coreward to Core and Gushemege.  
Contact Craig, Margaret, Lucan, and  
Strephon.

**The Mission:** Penetrate the war-  
torn shattered Imperium in search of  
some hope of a reunified empire.

Join the crew of the **Arrival  
Vengeance**, be a custodian of the  
future of the Domain of Deneb—  
perhaps that of the entire Imperium.



**HARD TIMES**  
*A MegaTraveller Sourcebook*



**ASTROGATOR'S GUIDE  
TO THE DIASPORA SECTOR**



**ASSIGNMENT: VIGILANTE**  
*Starmercs against Piracy*

Inevitably, aftermaths are longer than the wars that cause them. The War of the Rebellion is no exception.

**Hard Times** provides both referees and player with a detailed look at the post-Rebellion Imperium and the new challenges that they can expect to face in it. It includes:

- Practical guidelines for creating new adventures in the post-Rebellion Imperium.

- 10 well-detailed sample adventures, plus adventure outlines.

- A flexible adventure interface design that allows use of each of the adventures as part of a complete campaign.

- Additions to the UCP design sequence, special postwar industries, and a unique collection of implements and opponents.

**Astrogator's Guide** presents up-to-date information on the worlds and interplanetary conditions in this crossroads sector: the point of contact between Lucan, Margaret, Daibei, and the Solomani Confederation.

Intended for use with *Hard Times*, it includes color maps of all 16 subsectors, both 1121 and 1129, UWP data for all 476 worlds, and color insignia and symbols of the leading governments and military organizations.

In the wake of the Rebellion, chaos rules over the once proud Imperium. Bands of corsairs stalk the spaceways, crippling the trade that once linked over 11,000 worlds. Without some force to permit the safe passage of trade, interstellar society cannot help but collapse.

Even in these dark times, people can still be found to shoulder the burdens of civilization. One such group is the crew of the starship **Vigilante**. A fighter carrying mercenary ship, its dedicated crew of starmercs specializes in the eradication of pirate forces wherever they may be found.



## The Designers

**MegaTraveller** was the comprehensive revision of the **Classic Traveller** game rules published on the tenth anniversary of the original game's publication.



**Marc Miller** was the lead and system designer for **MegaTraveller**.

Miller, a founding partner in Game Designers' Workshop, established his reputation as a designer producing complex, detailed wargames in the 1970's, but found his true calling in science-fiction games. He was inducted into the Adventure Gaming Hall of Fame in 1989.



**Joe Fugate** was the founder of Digest Group Publications, which published the **Travellers' Digest** series of **Traveller** articles and adventures. Fugate was the editor of the core rules set for **MegaTraveller**.

## Who We Are...

Once upon a time, four game designers got together to publish their work under the name Game Designers' Workshop. From the beginning, GDW produced award-winning wargames and role-playing games. In fact, pioneered in publishing detailed wargames, innovative role-playing games, and entertaining game concepts. Over the course of the company's existence, they produced an average of one new title every 22 days for 22 years. GDW won every major award for design excellence, and inducted two of its designers (Frank Chadwick and Marc Miller) and one of their RPG systems (**Traveller**) into the Adventure Gaming Hall of Fame. GDW closed its doors in 1996.



Far Future Enterprises, established in 1996, is the successor to GDW and publishes in reprint format some (but not all) of the game systems which originated with GDW. FFE publishes the **Classic Traveller** reprint series, the **Classic Twilight: 2000** reprint series, and is preparing the **Classic 2300 AD** reprint series.

For information about Traveller on CD-ROM: [www.farfuture.net](http://www.farfuture.net)

For information about Traveller as ebooks: [www.drivethruRPG.com](http://www.drivethruRPG.com)