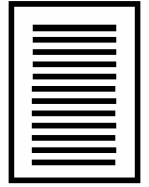


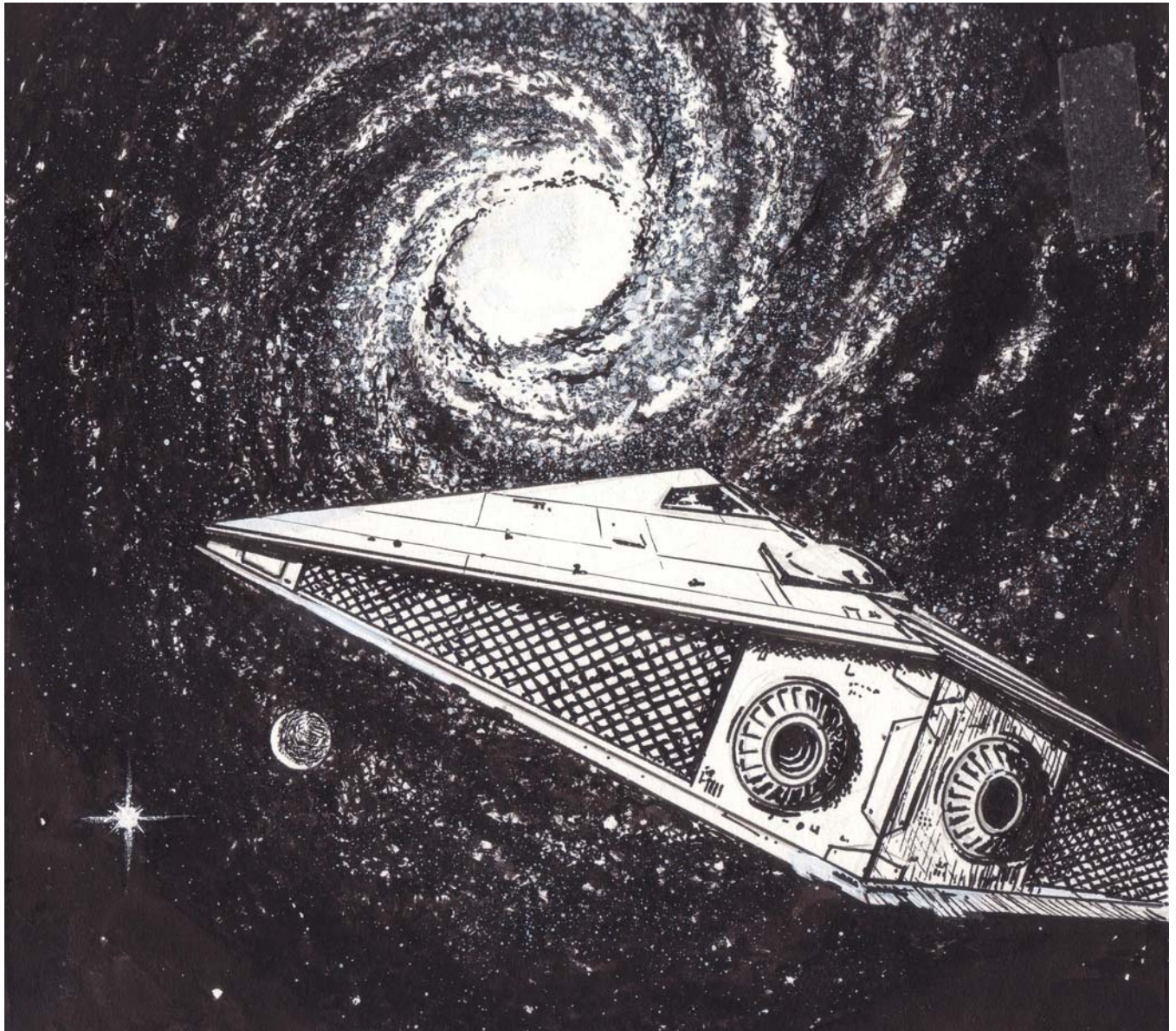
# *The Foundations of the Traveller Universe*



**Traveller** is a comprehensive science-fiction system spanning a major portion of the galaxy and reaching far into the future and far into the past. Fundamental to the **Traveller** science-fiction game system are answers to myriad questions about life, society, civilization in the universe. Yet everything is part of a cohesive structure that gradually unveils itself... to the participants and to observers (whether they are readers, viewers, or players).

**Traveller** describes a vast future universe in which mankind has already reached the stars and conquered thousands of worlds, but still faces the never-ending struggle to conquer more worlds and wrest more secrets from the universe.

**Based On A Role-Playing Game.** The basis for all of **Traveller** is a science-fiction role-playing game which details the fundamental principles of the universe... how people interact, how starships fly, how guns work, how business operates, how worlds are defined. Using those principles, any activity is possible, and players attempt most of them. Over time, the adventures of players and the ideas of writers has helped to create the future **Traveller** universe.



## FOUNDED ON BOTH HARD AND SOFT SCIENCE

**Traveller** is founded on the sciences: technological science and social science. Each adds realism to the system's universe while enhancing its adventure potential.

### Technological Science Provides A Foundation

The technological basis for **Traveller** provides a common ground from which all extrapolations and story ideas can spring.

**The Jump Drive.** The secret of interstellar travel is the jump drive. While in normal space, travel is limited to the speed of light (and it takes years to go from one star to another), jump drive leaps around space: a jump covers one parsec (3.26 light years; the average distance between stars) in about a week. Improved ships can reach speeds of more than 1,000 times the speed of light.

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Jump Drive is a foundation that makes interstellar travel easy to accomplish and easy to understand. Behind the future technology is a basic idea that can be conveyed visually or through simple conversations between crewmembers.

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**Communication Limited To The Speed Of Transportation.** The universe is so vast that even the mega-speeds of jump drive can't work miracles. No one has yet (or ever will) invented a hyper-communicator that will send messages faster than light-speed. Communication is limited to the speed of transportation; a message to the edge of the empire needs to be carried there. For an empire 300 parsecs to the border that message takes more than a year to deliver, even under the best of circumstances. News of war, conflict, invasion, disaster, or even peace takes just as long to get back to the center of government.

Consequently the folks governing "out there" have a lot of independence. A war can be over before the news of it reaches the Capital--and orders return--so, Dukes and Archdukes have to act on their own. Commanders of ships (exploring or warring) have a lot of independence as well. The characters have to think on their own--if they work for a merchant company, opening new markets, they can't "phone home" every time negotiations break down--and on the other hand, the company needs to accept all sorts of wacky contracts and situations!

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Restricted communication speeds mean that characters at great distance from their bosses are free to act as they wish. Characters without the restrictions of bosses are also thrown on their own initiative.

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**A Spectrum of Available Technology.** Technology is not evenly distributed throughout the universe; instead, world and cultures can be classified by their achieved technology level.

The technology available includes alternatives to traditional or normally expected technology, but radical deviations from "normal" technology are rare and unusual encounters.

Yet primitive technology has its place: backwaters off the main routes are often content with their own levels of technology.

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Allowing for different levels of technology permits players many different alternatives in how they approach situations.

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**Gravity Manipulation.** The advance of technology has resulted in practical methods of gravity manipulation. Gravity

manipulation expresses itself in four ways: as artificial gravity, as inertial dampers, as lifters, and as maneuver drives.

**Artificial gravity** is built into the deck plates of starships; ship environments are similar to planetary surfaces. **Inertial dampers** eliminate the extremes of inertia which can pull and push people and equipment as a ship maneuvers. Although such dampers are imperfect, they do allow a normal environment on starships as they maneuver, and they allow extreme physical maneuvers on small craft as they perform high-G maneuvers. A range of gravity-based drives move ships round in a star system: **Lifters** negate gravity and let ships (and other vehicles) to move more easily near world surfaces. Lifters operate effectively only near large masses. They are ineffective (and aren't really needed anyway) in deep space. Finally, gravitic technology is the foundation for Gravitic Drives, Maneuver Drives, and even NAFAL: the systems that carry ships between worlds in a star system.

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Grav Plates, Inertial Compensators, Lifters, and various Drives are included because they make it easier for players to conceptualize the actions of their characters, and because dramatic renderings of actions are realistic if they simply show people standing up.

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**Fusion Power.** Cheap fusion power means that the inhabitants of this universe are not tied to gas stations or complex fuel systems. Hydrogen from water, ice, even the atmospheres of gas giants (like Jupiter) is all that is required to produce abundant electricity. Once a culture rises to the minimum required tech level, its cities depend on electricity produced by efficient, pollution-free fusion power. Starships draw their fuel from the worlds they visit.

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Cheap fusion power simplifies adventuring by eliminating the need for routine refuelling on world surfaces. At the same time, the concept allows fueling requirements to be inserted where they add to the adventure situation.

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**Artificial People.** A natural result of technology is the ability to create artificial people: clones, chimeras, synthetics (androids, sophontoids), robots, even raw personalities in computers. Non-anthropomorphic robots (robots not in the shape of people) are common place at the higher technological levels, although they are also effectively invisible... they fade into the background. People-like robots appear at the upper limits of technology and are always imitations; they may be superior in one or more areas, but they all lack a common feature... initiative. Robots are unable to act with clear initiative in unfamiliar situations.

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Although robots are possible and present, they are not an overwhelming influence (or they are, if the referee and the players want to interact with them).

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### Social Science Adds Character And Flavor

The social sciences add their own flavor to the universe and impact many activities. Psychology supports the role and skill of counsellor; psychohistory adds the potential for large-scale manipulations of society; archeology helps understand the relicts of the past; and sophontology helps understand the intelligent beings of society.

**A Cosmopolitan Universe.** **Traveller** is a diverse, heterogeneous universe composed of many different factions, concepts, races, communities, and individuals. People (and the term is used to refer to "beings") come in many different forms, all of whom constantly interact as a

matter of course. Unless local circumstances require a homogeneous local population, travellers will continually encounter local populations which reflect diversity in terms of age, gender, and race. Even apparently homogeneous groups will reflect (upon examination) more diversity than expected.

Naturally, there is conflict, antagonism, friction, and strife between various groups, but the universe itself allows any individuals with talent to rise to the top of their field.

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Traveller accepts diversity and allows (even requires) a wide variety of beings to interact for their mutual benefit. Such a universe is richer than a purely human environment.

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**A Human-Dominated Universe.** Through a combination of fortuitous accident and strong-willed effort, humanity has reached a position of dominance in the universe. Three distinct groups of humans (the Vilani, the Solomani, and the Zhodani) have each created empires that span thousands of stars and trillions of citizens. In addition, more than a hundred additional human societies are scattered among the stars; each is, in its own way, a commentary on the strengths and the particular weaknesses of the human condition.

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Although the universe is cosmopolitan, it is human dominated primarily in order to retain an element of familiarity for the players.

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**Duty, Honor, and Loyalty.** Interstellar society naturally values people (human or not) on whom it can depend: those who are loyal and who faithfully do their duty are the ones to whom society awards responsibility. A natural nobility arises of those leaders of society who faithfully and with innovation follow the orders of their superiors. At the same time, superiors have learned to express their orders in the most general of terms: to give greater freedom of action.

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People with responsibilities are expected to act responsibly. If they do not, they won't hold their positions for long.

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**There Is No "Prime Directive."** Interstellar governments have never felt it their duty to impede development, especially economic development. No government has ever promulgated the "*Prime Directive*" (that undeveloped cultures and societies be allowed to develop without interference until they can enter the community of interstellar civilizations). Instead, economic forces have driven the development of those worlds rich in natural or exploitable resources, and have retarded the development of worlds without resources.

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Players are not hampered by artificial rules restricting what they can and cannot do.

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**Everything Is Driven By Economics.** Economics is not strictly the study of finance; it is the study of making choices from limited possibilities. Regardless of the pronouncements of political, moral, or cultural leaders, action in this universe takes place because it will produce some economic advantage. Economic advantage generally means rewards in a monetary sense, but it can also mean rewards in political or social power.

But at the foundation of all action is lies some economic motive.

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Players can understand what happens in **Traveller** because it is driven by the same elements that drive all human (or sophont) endeavor: economics.

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**Alternatives To Capitalism.** Between worlds, trade is governed by pure economics and by capitalism. Regionally, governments may impose laws (essentially uniform business codes) which allows everyone to interact using the same rules. On some worlds, special economic systems may be adopted by the local governments.

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Even alternatives to free market economics are possible.

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**Wheels Within Wheels.** The quest for meaning is always fruitful in the **Traveller** universe. Events, ideas, concepts, and beliefs are shaped by environments, but they are also shaped by the thinkers themselves. And as those thinkers (readers, players, or viewers) learn and mature, they begin to have new insights into their beliefs. For example, the casual player knows the Imperial beliefs about the Zhodani (that they are an evil empire intent on destroying the Imperium). Over time, some players may see these Zhodani as humans with families, goals and desires just like other humans. With time, some players may see some Zhodani as inherently good. And over time is it possible to see that some Zhodani are still evil. In the **Traveller** system, **Wheels within Wheels** constantly shows new ideas and new facets of old ideas to the participants.

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Crucial to the **Traveller** adventure concept is the idea that the rationale behind events or situations has a surface explanation, but when examined fully there are often deeper explanations which in turn give a greater understanding of how the universe works.

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## ADVENTURE!

Above all, this universe is filled with *adventure*. Individuals can own starships and travel on their own to distant worlds. Individuals can undertake literally world-shattering missions whose results depend on their personal courage and resources. Individuals are the key to discovery, progress, and the turning points in history.

The **Traveller** system addresses adventure through three specific areas:

### Casual Players

Any role-player can play **Traveller**. The concepts are intuitive: travel, exploration, interaction, negotiation, combat, and all kinds of tasks. Individuals can role-play diverse characters or they can play themselves.

Casual players can be so casual that they know nothing about the game system at all, leaving it to the referee to handle the details.

### Detailed Role-Players

**Traveller** provides dedicated gamers the opportunity to role-play complex characters with strong motivations and intricate backgrounds. The **Traveller** system can be as casual or as rich as the participants want it to be.

### Systems Engineers

The **Traveller** system provides referees and game masters the materials with which to explore the **Traveller** universe in

detail. Starship design systems, world generation systems, vehicle description systems, trade and commerce systems, and encounter systems. Each is produced with two specific goals in mind: as a prod to the imagination, and to allow game masters opportunities to create custom equipment or information.

### CHARACTERS

The central focus of **Traveller** is its vast array of characters. While every person in this universe of the future is a potential character to be played by a participant, **Traveller** concentrates on the exciting potential of explorers, powerful negotiators, military leaders, and intelligent academics. Each player assumes the alter ego of one or more characters and it is through these characters that the adventures of **Traveller** are played out.

Characters naturally follow a progression as the players behind them grow in knowledge and sophistication.

### Money

At the elementary level, characters (and their players) are interested in economic benefits and in the adventures and

means that bring them money and equipment.

### Power

Once a certain level of economic independence is reached and money declines in importance as a personal goal, the individual characters tend to focus on power and the means of achieving power. Power is expressed in many different ways: corporate power, political power, reputation.

### Understanding

Once a certain level of power has been achieved, the individual characters move on to the next step of personal development: understanding the many aspects of the universe that surrounds them. Again, **Traveller** satisfies this goal with its rich, varied universe filled with information and the potential for discovery.

Ultimately, the player behind the character reaches the next level of achievement within the **Traveller** universe: he or she becomes a referee devoted to administering the **Traveller** universe for other players.

