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Halfway Station Presents…

Rants, Rogues & Rules

Traveller Articles
by Andy Slack

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"How do you tell a youngster raised on the 3V serials that you're still alive only because you ran away with less provocation than the other five guys - and you're rich because you've got their shares as well?"
- Shel Meldol, ITSS (Retd.)

BACKGROUND

The Scout Service of the Imperium has many tasks; probably the most widely known is its survey function. *Traveller Book 1* provides a character generation system for general adventurer characters; this article presents an expanded procedure for more experienced scouts of the Survey Arm.

The Scout Service Survey Arm performs astronomical and planetological surveys of unexplored subsectors. If Lost Colonies or alien life-forms are discovered in the course of these surveys, the Service makes recommendations as to the advisability of contact, exploitation and trade. Suitable planets are recommended for colonisation, in which case the Service provides liaison personnel to advise and protect new colonists. Due to their intimate knowledge of certain systems and superior sensor equipment, Scout personnel are often seconded to the Navy as pathfinders, guides or interpreters; particularly if aliens or ecology-disrupting modes of assault are to be involved.

Retired Scouts are much in demand by the smaller governments and larger corporations of the Galaxy for their own exploration/exploitation projects. Such projects tend to be less fastidious than the Imperium about possible effects on local ecologies and populations.

NOTE ON SKILLS

To conserve space, definitions of skills acquired have not been included; therefore, persons using this article will need:

- *Traveller, Book 1*

- *Mercenary, Traveller Book 4*

- *High Guard, Traveller Book 5*

- *Citizens of the Imperium, Supplement 4*

If *Mercenary* and *High Guard* are not used in your campaign, this article will probably give Scout characters too great an advantage over other classes.

Weapon Combat

This skill may be taken as *Blade Combat, Gun Combat* or *Brawling* at the player's discretion.

ENLISTMENT

A throw of 7+ on 2D6 is required to enlist in the Scout Service. A DM of +1 is allowed for Intelligence 6+, and a DM of +2 is allowed for Strength 8+. These DMs are cumulative.

ACQUIRING SKILLS AND EXPERTISE

Upon enlistment, a character embarks on a term of service lasting four years. This is divided into four one-year assignments. Characters determine their assignment each year,

then resolve all actions pertaining to it. Upon completing the fourth assignment, the character has concluded one four year term, and may attempt to re-enlist (a throw of 3+ on 2D6 is required) or elect to muster out.

Specialities

When first enlisting, a character determines in what capacity he will serve the Scouts by rolling 1D6 and consulting the *Speciality Selection* table below. DMs: +2 if Intelligence 10+, -2 if Intelligence 5-. A further DM of +2 is allowed at the character's option if his Education is 11+.

The six Specialities of the Survey Arm are *Security, Support, Flight, Geology, Ecology* and *Contact*.

SPECIALITY SELECTION

0. Security

1. Security

2. Support

3. Support

4. Flight

5. Geology

6. Ecology

7. Contact

Security Specialists are charged with protecting the personnel of the other five groups from hostile life-forms and other hazards; *Support Specialists* ensure the continued functioning of the many and varied items of high-technology equipment used by the Service; *Flight Specialists* have the responsibility of delivering the other groups to their destination intact. The first three groups are therefore concerned with enabling the personnel of *Geology, Ecology* and *Contact* to perform their tasks free from distraction; these tasks are respectively mineral resources surveys, surveys of current and potential flora and fauna, and liaison with local cultures.

Flight Specialists are also concerned with Remote Sensing of systems and the construction of astrogation charts.

Once a Speciality has been selected, a character may only change it by cross-training in the Speciality he wishes to transfer to, then re-enlisting in that Speciality at the beginning of a new four-year term.

Basic and Advanced Training

This occupies the first assignment of the first term. The character rolls for two skills on his Speciality Skills Table.

ASSIGNMENTS

Each assignment is resolved separately. This is a three-stage process: first, the character determines if he has been placed in command of a Scout team. Roll 2D6; if the result is less than or equal to the character's current Grade, he has been placed in a command position. Second, the character rolls 2D6 on the *Specific Assignments* table to determine his assignment for that year; and lastly, the assignment is resolved. Four rolls (each on 2D6) on the appropriate *Assignment Resolution* table are required:

1. *Survival*: To survive an assignment, the character must roll the indicated number or higher on 2D6. Since duty in the Scouts is particularly hazardous, if exactly the number stated is thrown, the character has received some crippling injury in the line of duty. One of his physical characteristics is reduced by one point (roll 1D6: 1, 2 = Strength, 3, 4 = Dexterity, 5,6 = Endurance) and his next assignment is automatically to a base hospital where he spends the year recovering. However, since the Service does not believe in wasting manpower, roll 4+ on 1D6 to receive a level of expertise in each of the following skills: *Admin, Computer, Instruction*.

Optionally, characters failing to make their survival roll are allowed a saving throw against death. If a character rolls his Endurance or less on 2D6, he is considered not to have been killed, but instead to be so severely maimed that he is granted an honourable discharge on medical grounds. He musters out immediately, without completing any remaining assignments of that term; he does not dice for Bonuses, Promotion or Skills for that assignment, and Strength, Dexterity, Endurance and Intelligence are reduced by one point each.

2. *Bonuses*: Characters may receive Bonuses for ingenuity. If the indicated number or higher is rolled, a *Science Bonus* is awarded. The character is allowed a DM of +1 on the next roll for promotion. If the number rolled is at least three higher than the indicated number, a *Prize for Outstanding Contribution to Science* is received. This allows a DM of +2 on the next promotion roll. If the number rolled is at least six higher than the number stated, a *First Contact Bonus* is received. The winner of a *First Contact Bonus* immediately receives +1 Social Standing, is allowed a DM of +3 on the next promotion roll, and many choose his next assignment.

A character who has consistently been awarded at least one Bonus per term of Service receives a DM of +1 when rolling for benefits upon mustering out.

3. *Promotion*: There are no actual ranks in the Scout Service; a fluid structure assigns individuals on a basis of ability. However, an individual's Pay Grade increases with experience and responsibility. The Pay Grades used in this article are exactly parallel to the Enlisted ranks in *Mercenary* and *High Guard*; they range from G1 to G9. Promotion may be gained as often as once per assignment; and by long-standing tradition, any Scout (except *Security Specialists*) returning from a *Survey* mission is automatically promoted one Grade.

A roll on 2D6 at least equal to the stated number indicates that the character has been promoted one Grade; on a roll of exactly 2 or 3, however, the insubordination for which Scouts are rightly famous has caused the character to be reduced one Grade as a disciplinary action. A Scout reduced in Grade to G0 musters out immediately, and loses one point of Social Standing.

4. *Skills*: A character may receive skills if he rolls the indicated number or higher. Which *Skill* table is to be consulted depends on the current assignment and the character's Speciality.

Any character may opt to roll on the *Scout Life* table or his *Speciality Skills* table regardless of the current assignment. If the character was placed in a command position, he may roll on the *Command Skills* table. If the assignment on which the skill was gained was *Battle, Pathfinder*, or *Colony Protection* the *Combat Skills* table may be used; if the assignment was *Covert Survey, Colony Assessment, Colony Protection* or *Training* the *Hole Life* table may be used; the *Ship Life* table, if the assignment was *Battle, Pathfinder, Recon* or *Survey*.

DEFINITION OF ASSIGNMENT TYPES

Battle
The character has become involved in a naval or ground battle as a "military advisor".

Covert Survey

The character has infiltrated a society which is as yet uncontacted in order to assess its likely interaction with the Imperium. He may recommend interdiction.

Pathfinder

The character, because of his intimate knowledge of local space, has been selected to spearhead a planetary assault, guiding in the first wave of troops dropped.

Recon

The character has been ordered to make a deep penetration data-gathering sweep through hostile or potentially hostile space.

Colony Assessment

Following reports by a Survey team, the character has been picked to assess the suitability of a potentially useful planet for colonisation or exploitation.

Colony Protection

The character has been detailed to protect and instruct the personnel of a new colony.

Training

The character has been recalled to Base for advanced training in his Speciality.

Survey

The character has been assigned to a mission which will map a new subsector, and search it for useful planets.

Special Duty

Roll 1D6 to determine the type of Special Duty:

1. *Recruiting*: The character has been assigned to Recruiting Duty, and receives one level of *Recruiting* expertise. In addition, on a roll of 4+ on 1D6, a level of *Admin* expertise is gained.

2. *Cross-Training*: The character rolls once on the *Skills* table of any Speciality except his own. He notes the fact of cross-training in that Speciality, and may opt to re-enlist in it at the beginning of his next four-year term.

3. *Covert Survey School*: Ostensibly a school training Scouts for *Covert Survey* assignments, it is rumoured that this school has other uses for its graduates; this is, however, officially denied. Up to eight skills may be received; roll 5+ on 1D6 for each of the following skills: *Forgery, Bribery, Interrogation, Streetwise, Admin, Weapon Cbt, Recon, Combat Engineering*. Note that a Scout learning *Weapon Cbt* in this school may elect to take one level of expertise in *Bow Cbt*. This is the only way in which a Scout may acquire *Bow Cbt*. (Defined in *Citizens of the Imperium*.)

4. *Colony School*: This school teaches skills useful on *Colony Protection* or *Colony Assessment* assignments. Roll 4+ on 1D6 for each of the following skills: *Survival, Instruction, Hunting, Prospecting*.

5. *Synergy School*: The character has been selected to receive instruction in a generalised, systems approach to heuristic problem-solving. One level of *Jack-of-Trades* expertise is received automatically.

6. *Contact School*: The character has been selected for training in the art of contacting other cultures. Roll 4+ on 1D6 for each of the following: *Liaison, Carousing, Streetwise*.

Multiple School Assignments

If a character is assigned to a school and already has a skill level of 3+ in one of the skills offered there, the assignment is instead to the school as an instructor; instead of dicing for the stated skills, the character receives one level of *Instruction* expertise automatically. Characters may be assigned to a school any number of times.

RE-ENLISTMENT AND MUSTERING OUT

After completing four one-year assignments, a character has concluded a four-year term, and may elect to muster out or attempt to re-enlist. Re-enlistment is allowed on a throw of 3+ on 2D6. If the dice roll is a natural 12, the character must re-enlist.

Mustering out, aging and retirement are conducted in accordance with *Traveller, Book 1*. A character choosing this generation system is not eligible for term skills as detailed in *Traveller, Book 1*.

SERVICE ADVENTURES

An alternative to the standard *Traveller* adventure format is to start a character from scratch, and "live out" his terms of Service as adventures; in this case, just dice up an assignment each game year and play through the important parts.

TABLES

SPECIFIC ASSIGNMENTS

Die Roll	Assignment	Die Roll	Assignment
2	Battle	8	Training
3	Covert Survey	9	Survey
4	Pathfinder	10	Survey
5	Recon	11	Survey
6	Colony Assessment	12	Special Duty
7	Colony Protection		

Assignment Resolution

Security

	Battle	Covert Survey	Path-finder	Recon	Col Ass	Col Prot	Train-ing	Survey
Survival	7+	5+	8+	5+	5+	6+	3+	3+
Bonus	12+	10+	11+	11+	10+	11+	None	9+
Promo-tion	6+	8+	5+	8+	8+	7+	8+	9+
Skill	6+	7+	5+	7+	7+	7+	6+	9+

DMs: Survival - +1 if Endurance 9+; +1 if any weapon skill level 2+.

Support, Flight

	Battle	Covert Survey	Path-finder	Recon	Col Ass	Col Prot	Train-ing	Survey
Survival	6+	4+	7+	4+	4+	5+	3+	3+
Bonus	12+	12+	11+	11+	9+	11+	12+	8+
Promo-tion	6+	8+	5+	8+	8+	7+	8+	Auto
Skill	6+	7+	5+	7+	7+	7+	5+	7+

DMs: Survival - +1 if Endurance 9+; +1 if any Specialist skill level 2+.

Geo, Eco, Contact

	Battle	Covert Survey	Path-finder	Recon	Col Ass	Col Prot	Train-ing	Survey
Survival	5+	3+	6+	3+	4+	4+	Auto	3+
Bonus	12+	9+	12+	12+	10+	10+	12+	8+
Promo-tion	10+	9+	10+	9+	9+	9+	9+	Auto
Skill	9+	6+	9+	9+	6+	6+	5+	6+

DMs: Survival - +1 if Endurance 9+; +1 if Survival-2 or better. Bonus - +1 if Intelligence 10+; +1 if Education 12+.

Speciality Skills

	Security	Support	Flight	Geology	Ecology	Contact
1	Weapon Cbt	Admin	Vacc	Prosp	Hunting	Admin
2	Weapon Cbt	Admin	Vacc	Prosp	Hunting	Admin
3	Zero-G	Mech	Admin	Veh	Survival	Street
4	Survival	Elec	Commo	Engnrng	Veh	Veh
5	Hvy Wpn	Comp	Sh Bt	Prosp	Comp	Comp
6	Veh	Grav	Engnrng	Mech	Medic	Liaison
7	B. Dress	Medic	Nav	Elec	Hunting	Liaison
8	Tactics	J-O-T	Pilot	Comp	J-O-T	J-O-T

DMs: +1 if Intelligence 9+; +2 if Grade G4+.

Other Skills

	Scout Life	Ship Life	Hole Life	Combat Skills	Command Skills
1	Wpn Cbt	Vacc	Wpn Cbt	Fwd Obsv	Veh
2	+1 Str	Gambling	Wpn Cbt	Wpn Cbt	+1 End
3	Carousing	Mech	Wpn Cbt	Demo	Wpn Cbt
4	Gambling	Sh Bt	Survival	Recon	Survival
5	Survival	Elec	Veh	Cmb Eng	Admin
6	+1 Dex	Zero-G	Hunting	Medic	Liaison
7	+1 End	Commo	Prosp	Veh	Carousing
8	+1 Intel	Engnrng	Gambling	Wpn Cbt	Ship Tactics
9	+1 Educ	Nav	Carousing	Pilot	Fleet Tactics
10	J-O-T	Pilot	Leader	J-O-T	Leader

DMs: +4 if Grade G6+.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

This was the first article I wrote for White Dwarf as a Games Workshop staffer. Scouts had always been my favourite career for characters, but in the groups I gamed with they were falling out of favour because players preferred the richer character generation sequences in Mercenary and High Guard. So, using High Guard as a model, I developed a similar sequence for Scouts.

The official Traveller canon rendered this article obsolete when Scouts were detailed in Book 6. I carried on using it myself for years, as it better fits the Scout Service in my Traveller universe; but I abandoned it in the late 1980s when I switched to the 2300 AD and GURPS rules, which have a different approach to prior service.

Backdrop of Stars

Setting Up Traveller Campaigns by Andy Slack
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One major problem in *Traveller* campaigns is the question of 'background' - or rather the lack of it. This article proposes some ideas on how the problem can be solved.

First 'background' must be defined. As used here, 'background' is a solid, believable and consistent campaign world; if a campaign has this background, then characters become 'real' people rather than statistics. When background is present, there are times when the players literally see through their characters' eyes, and identify with them to a degree impossible in lesser games.

It is this which distinguishes a good referee from a bad one. A good games master will create a good background, and as a result games in that campaign will be good regardless of which rules and scenarios he is using.

A campaign without a background causes problems: The games master who can't think of a scenario, the player with a new character saying "What shall I do with him? What's the point of the game?"

Let's look at some other games and see why *Traveller* is particularly prone to these problems.

Like myself, most *Traveller* players started off in *D&D*. This game has few problems of background. The DM has no trouble setting up a Mediaeval backdrop for his campaign, bceause thanks to hundreds of fairy tales, films, comics and books absorbed almost from birth, you needn't spend hours describing a village in detail, or how a crossbow works, or what a horse looks like; you simply say 'You enter a village,' 'They have crossbows,' or 'You see a horse in front of you.' And everyone present knows what you mean, instantly.

There is likewise no trouble in developing a personality for a character, complete with objectives. Looking at die rolls for characteristics, you can see at once what the character will be best as. Once a character class is chosen, a rough sketch of the character is already present; a paladin will be generous and kind to small children and animals, a monk may imitate Grasshopper or Shang Chi, and so on.

Most fantasy role-playing games are similar: *D&D, C&S, T&T, TFT* and so on ad infinitum draw on a background of wizards and warriors ingrained below the conscious level in most of us. There are a few of another kind: These games do not draw on an immediately familiar background, but instead describe a novel one. *RuneQuest* is the prime example of this; after reading the description of Glorantha, looking over the map, and learning our cult's aims in life, we quickly feel at home. Yet these games are 'cheating'; Glorantha may be strange, but a crossbow is still a crossbow, a horse is still a horse, and trolls still behave like the trolls of fairytale despite different statistics.

A *Traveller* referee cannot draw on historical prototypes for his milieu. Thus statistics rarely become clothed in flesh; referees give up because the game lacks something, players discuss *D&D* trips in little huddles while he dices up encounters, and everyone goes back to the dungeon.

GDW produce an excellent background in *The Spinward Marches*, *the Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society* and other sources. However, this article is for those referees who don't want to buy these supplemental materials. Here then, for what they're worth, are some tricks that can be used to get around this problem of background. Nor are they limited to *Traveller*; some of these ideas will be useful in other games and have probably been thought of before by a lot of other DMs...

Rolling Your Own

Don't be afraid to plagiarise. If you see a good idea anywhere, grab it and weld it on. After a while your campaign doesn't look much like anyone else's, but that's part of the fun of role-playing games. By adding and deleting rules, scenarios and so on, you eventually wind up with a game that has been tailored to your own group's preferences. A lot of people refuse to use anything that isn't 'official'; don't be one of them.

Don't try to roll up a million planets right away; this makes it difficult to generate any detail. Even if the players have a starship to begin with, start with a couple of planets and work them out in depth. If the players want to move on, and you want them to stay, either admit that you haven't worked out anywhere else - most players will understand - or invent some reason why their characters can't leave. ('I'm sorry, guys, but the nearest stockist for that spare you need if fifty parsecs away. You'll have to wait for the mail.')

Start with the statistics, and ask yourself: Why did these come to be? With a little practice, and some dice rolls to inject variety, you'll be generating immensely devious and interesting backgrounds in no time at all. Don't reroll 'nonsensical' results until you're sure you can't explain them.

Have an overall struggle into which the players can fit. This gives them some kind of overall goal which will carry them through several early adventures, until they find purposes for their characters. (It's rare for someone to play more than a few sessions without coming up with some long-term aim for himself - this can be anything up to and including ruling the galaxy. Often this will mean they abandon your carefully-plotted goals; let them.)

If a struggle is present, the players can side with one party or the other, or play both ends against the middle. Where possible, work out several layers of plot, then interesting rumours and encounters can surface.

Some useful struggles that could be set up are:

1: Mission: Impossible

This is typified by the Sable Rose Affair in White Dwarf 17. Here we have a group of players who have been recruited by a highly secret organisation to perform tasks which cannot be openly countenanced; of course, while all possible aid will be given, the players must work out their own methods; and should they be caught or killed, the Imperial Senate will disavow all knowledge...

Tasks here are numerous and will keep most characters usefully employed. Possible operations set up by the referee, acting as the group's Case Officer, include surveillance, kidnapping, blackmail, arson, murder, paramilitary commando raids, piracy... the list could go on for pages. Bear in mind, too, that there will usually be several government agencies of this kind on both sides of the border, which will be competing for appropriations and thus unfriendly towards each other. (My own Covert Survey Bureau spends more time trying to discredit Naval Counter-Intelligence than it does breaking up Zhodani spy rings...)

2: Punishment Battalion

This plot requires a war, and is suited to militaristic or 'hack and slay' players. Players represent the vilest psychopaths their stellar empire has produced, who have been banded together for convenience and sent off on those suicidal missions which are so prevalent in futuristic warfare. This leads to fairly straightforward bloodbaths and some enjoyable table-topping.

3: Where No Man Has Gone Before

Here the group has been given the task of exploring a new subsector - this one is obviously good for solitaire play. In a suitable exploration ship, the crew proceed from world to world, mapping the subsector as they go. Depending on whether they are sponsored by a government or a merchant company, their opponents may be hostile aliens, native life-forms or explorers from other organisations. Their objectives may be to negotiate trading deals, diplomatic treaties, or simply to establish a naval or scout base.

4: Shogun

This does not take place on the frontier of your empire, but near the capital worlds. It is postulated that the emperor is involved in some kind of power struggle, where the nobles and other powerful beings of the empire have split into factions, each vying for control of the throne. This scenario lends itself readily to assassinations and underhand skullduggery, not so well to straightforward slaughter. The players will be hired by one faction or another, and thereafter events will proceed much as in case 1: Mission: Impossible, with the difference that the enemies are internal rather than outside the empire.

5: Star Wars
In which the heroic (or villainous) players strive to overthrow (or preserve) the corrupt and tyrannical empire. Or the hideous barbarians attempt to sack the ancient galactic civilisation. It's up to you.

Other set-ups will suggest themselves; this list is by no means exhaustive. It is perfectly feasible for a campaign to have several of these plots running at once; once a campaign has been going for a while, such crutches will no longer be needed as players develop their own goals, but will still be useful background material, providing opportunities to the group.

Methods
There are several methods of generating background besides working it all out from scratch. These vary in usefulness, and are presented here without comment.

The referee can generate a character for himself and run solo trips for this character, noting down all encounters for use in later games. By means of asking the dice questions and noting the answers, a background quickly appears.

Let some of the non-players encountered by the group be 'personality' non-players; that is, NPCs who have been worked out in considerable detail, like a 'real' player character. These people will have their own goals and plots which may (or may not) involve the players. How to do this will be covered later in the description of patrons.

Write up the trips and adventures of your band as stories and circulate them. This forces you to concentrate on describing a character's surroundings and equipment; and once these descriptions have been circulated, people all 'know' what a phase-interlocked grunge rifle (or whatever) looks like. This is important for the 'feel' of the game. If someone in the group has artistic talent, drawings are even better.

Let the players work out some of the background for you. They, too, can design a planet, an alien, a ship; sometimes this develops into whole subsectors run by another gamer in which you can adventure.

You will find that after a brief period - usually a few months - the campaign becomes 'self-sustaining'; the characters already present, and the world descriptions, begin to generate scenarios and background information by themselves. Often thereafter, you will find that you are observing your universe as it unfolds rather than consciously creating it.

Player's Complaints
The first one to arise will be: 'What character class shall I be?' In other words, which career/service should the character enter? The best method for a new player is to ask him which fictional hero he'd like to imitate and insert him into an appropriate service. Alternatively, pre-dice a character for him; Traveller characters, particularly in the expanded generation mode, take a long time to dice up, during which some players may wander off and join another game. At the other extreme, there are those who don't actually play, but enjoy dicing up characters. Encourage these people to leave you the results, and you have a ready-made supply of NPCs... (something I've not actually tried yet is making new players start as Barbarians (from *Supplement 4*), so that being bewildered at the background is in character).

The next problem will be choosing a long-term goal for the character once he's been diced up. Many players will expect the life's purpose of their character to be spoon-fed to them. This is where your carefully prepared background and struggle will come in. Until he knows what kind of universe he's in, how can a player plan anything? Don't expect much for the first few sessions, because everyone involved has to learn their way around your universe. For really bad cases of confusion, use the method suggested for patron generation below.

Soon (particularly if hard-core *D&D* players) your group will ask the embarassing question: How do I improve my skills? (Translation: Where are the experience points?) This occurs less frequently with experienced players, who tend to go in more for developing a character and global domination than accumulating experience points and going up levels. In all such awkward moments, never tell a player it is impossible to do something. Just make it very, very difficult. For example, most people in my group (including myself, to be fair) wanted experience points. So a system was devised, which ended complaints despite the fact that since its form stabilised only two people have gone up a level in any skill by experience. It's far faster to use a friendly instructor - and since Book 4's Instruction skill, the experience problem has died down.

Next we come to the hack-and-slayers. *Traveller* is not really for them. The first decent hit anyone scores on you in *Traveller* will render you unconscious at the very least. So even with restrained players, it's advisable for them to run a couple of characters each (two seems to be optimum - people can't usually develop more than two characters at once). In *Traveller*, fighting is something to be avoided if at all possible, as in real life. This seems to sit better with older or more experienced players.

Another complaint comes from people who have set their hearts on some particular item, usually powered armour or a phaser. Don't be afraid to put your foot down and say they can't have it, if it will upset your campaign. It is better, however, to let them have a reasonable facsimile - with a reasonable drawback. For example, see Joe Haldeman's *Forever War* for all the things that can go wrong with powered armour.

Referee's Problems
The main and recurring problem for referees is setting up commissions. When all else fails, let the dice decide!

First, you must generate a patron. (This technique is also useful for working out personality NPCs, and the characters of inexperienced players.)

Dice up a suitable character. Examine his UPP, skills and record. How does he look? His terms of service will give you his age. Does he look muscular (high Strength)? Tough (high Endurance)? Graceful (high Dexterity)? Is he a good conversationalist (high Intelligence and Education)? What social class does he come from? Do his skills (Leader, Carousing, Streetwise) make him especially easy to get on with? And so on. UPP, skills, service. These tell you more about a character than you'd think. When a difficult choice appears, consult the dice for an answer.

Similarly, what kind of person is he? Is he smart (Intelligence and Education again)? Can you trust him? (Probably not, if he's got Forgery-3.)

The merchant in Book 1, provided as an example of character generation, is the sort of thing you will get here. Service history is a valuable aid in working out a character. Has he got wounds of some kind, for instance - yes, if he barely made his survival roll a time or two.

You now know what kind of person the patron is; what would a man like that do with his life? What is his long-term goal, and how close is he to achieving it? Once you know these things, since you know what the players' characters are like, you will know why he wants to hire them instead of anyone else. Usually there are few commissions which a specific, detailed patron actually would hire a given band for. They're fairly apparent.

If not, seek further information. Ask the dice: Is this commission concerned with some kind of person? (If so, dice up a random person or patron; generate a character to fit; flesh him out in the same way as the patron, and ask yourself: How would these two relate to each other, and why are the players involved?) Or, is the job concerned with some kind of cargo? (Dice a random cargo on the trade and speculation table, and try to figure out why the patron is interested.)

This becomes easier as the campaign goes on, and the background which you've generated is invaluable. Eventually some characters will become powerful enough to hire other bands to do their dirty work for them - by which time they should have been retired from play, but will occasionally participate as military commanders, trading magnates, etc. In this case, they will already have a clear aim which the band can further, or they wouldn't have made it that far.

Another kind of 'commission' is the rumour; rumours can be simply rumours of a patron generated as above, or snippets of your background surfacing for the first time. If a scenario is already in progress, it will be fairly easy to think of a rumour which can help/thwart/confuse the party (delete where inapplicable). If the rumour is the starting point, then a piece of your local Library Data might be enough to spur the band into action. For example, on page 28 of the Spinward Marches, we note the planet Zila as a renowned wine producer, while its neighbour Pysadi is ruled by a religious dictatorship which prohibits alcohol. Someone with a Jump-2 drive and few scruples could surely make quite a killing there smuggling booze.

(A similar method to the patron/rumour generation process can be used to develop your background. You might dice up several nobles from Supplement 4, and declare them to be the last few emperors. Compare their service records. One might have died in service - did his successor assassinate him? Or, if he retired, was he forced to abdicate? If so, how?)

The most intriguing method of generating rumours can be used with great effect when you are refereeing several independent groups in the same campaign universe. One group can then uncover rumours of the other's activities. They may be recruited by the Imperium to stop those activities if the other group has been obnoxious enough. If the first group is rich enough, the second group may decide to rob them. There are endless possibilities. This does give some problems when the groups meet; either you can call them together and watch them battling with a ferocity never achieved against NPCs, or you can 'split' your time-lines; you then have two parallel universes, in which each group in turn is used as a non-player gang while the other is run by the players concerned. In this case, with a little extra record-keeping, after the fallout has settled each side can blissfully go on believing it has won - after all, if the groups met each other regularly the whole set-up would have been impossible.

There is a third, bastard kind of commission: The linked list of patrons. Here there is some vast treasure/intriguing rumour/ancient lost city, or some similar interesting thing which has been well-documented in your background as a legend, for example. The group runs into a patron who is tracking down the source of the legend. He hasn't much to go on, but he himself has a rumour which states that such-and-such person knows some important key fact about the whole affair. When this person is unearthed at last, he too has a rumour, leading to a third patron - and so on for as long as your ingenuity holds out. Several of GDW's adventures run this way, with the group fulfilling minor commissions along the way, all the time gathering more evidence to lead them to the Big One.

Of course, there are times when all these fail, or you haven't had time to work out a scenario. In this case, there are a few standard fall-back options.

Trading: Someone will have a starship in most groups; if they have, they probably need money. Most groups in this position will cheerfully wander around trading and beating off the odd pirate. Frequently a commission will appear as if from nowhere, for example if they found the Zila/Pysadi setup described above. This requires at least one subsector mapped out, though not in great detail; just the stats will do. Things like animal encounters can be diced up as they happen.

The shadows of the past: When a group has been going for some time, at least one of them will have made a powerful enemy. He could decide it was worth tracking the group down to settle accounts.

The arena: If a group is really hard-up, there is always the arena in which Dumarest frequently finds himself. Here, with varying degrees of legality, travellers down on their luck fight each other with assorted weapons to first blood or to the death. There is an arena at most starports of A, B or C class where the jaded appetites of the nobility are slaked with the blood of others; the winner gets a percentage of the bets made, and can expect to realise enough money for a High Passage after a few weeks or months - if he survives.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

> *This and the Introduction to Traveller series are my personal favourites of the articles I wrote for White Dwarf.*

Blowout!

> *Vacc Suits in* Traveller *by Andy Slack*
> *Originally published in White Dwarf 25 - © Games Workshop Limited 1981*

While it is possible to adventure in any environment using *Traveller* rules, my preference has always been space actions. Thus, it was not long before the rules on vacc suits were expanded. The three types of vacc suit and the associated rules given below are the result.

CIV STD

Civilian Standard vacc suits are typified by 20th century Terran models such as the Apollo EVA suit. TL: 7; Cr 10,000.

They carry the following: Medium range communicator, electric torch, emergency repair kit, anti-glare visor, numerous belt loops and pockets for tools and samples, wristwatch, provision for safety lines, distress flare and homing beacon, sensors to determine external atmosphere type if any, and magnetic compass.

By Imperial law, a spacecraft must carry vacc suits to outfit all crew and high or middle passengers. These may be in the ship's locker, or where they are frequently needed.

A Merchant, Pirate or Belter character may elect to forego one of his rolls for mustering out benefits, receiving instead a CIV STD vacc suit.

MIL STD

Military standard vacc suits resemble a skintight leotard made of elastic, porous material. Thus clad, a person's own skin acts as his pressure suit, his sweat glands as the temperature control system. TL: 9; Cr 20,000.

Equipment is as for the CIV STD, with the following exceptions: No emergency repair kit carried; magnetic compass replaced by inertial locator; and the following additional items are fitted: Telephone jack and cord for communication in radio silence, facilities for plugging into shipboard air/power supplies to conserve those in the backpack, systems capable of monitoring the wearer's vital signs from a backpack readout or over a radio/computer link, heavy-duty overshoes, geiger counter, and hand calculator.

A Navy, Marine or Scout character may elect to forego one roll for mustering out benefits, and receive in lieu a MIL STD vacc suit.

Emergency Vacc Suits

These are little more than a man-shaped plastic bag. TL: 8+; Cr 1,000.

Emergency vacc suits carry no equipment other than that required to keep the wearer alive for a short period. They are scattered throughout all kinds of starship in strategic

locations, where they may be grabbed in an emergency by persons with no time for stronger measures.

General
Both CIV STD and MIL STD vacc suits have backpacks and helmets, which are interchangeable in emergencies. These contain facilities for the supply of air, heating/cooling as necessary, and limited amounts of water and emergency rations. Emergency vacc suits have only an air supply. CIV STD or MIL STD vacc suits can support their occupants for 16 hours 40 minutes, and for up to one week provided replacement air tanks are available. Emergency vacc suits can support their occupants for 2 hours and replacement air tanks are not feasible.

Standard EVA kits are available for CIV STD and MIL STD suits, consisting of a rocket pack capable of up to 3" of acceleration, and re-entry shield enabling a safe re-entry at speeds up to 2". Such kits are available at TL 8+, costing Cr 5,000. Ships come equipped with three such kits per thousand tons of displacement; minimum three kits on a starship and one on a non-starship.

Fitting and Donning
CIV STD suits may be purchased off-the-peg at any class A or B starport. Their size is determined by a 2D6 throw, and is prominently stencilled on them. A character may wear such a suit if any one of his physical characteristics (strength, dexterity or endurance) is the same as the suit's size.

MIL STD suits must be tailor-made for the wearer, a process requiring 6-8 weeks at a class A starport, during which the character must be available for weekly fittings. A character must have the same physical characteristics and gender as the wearer to don such a suit.

Emergency vacc suits can be worn by anyone. Characters may only wear vacc suits designed for their species.

To don a vacc suit requires two minutes for a CIV STD; ten minutes for a MIL STD; 15 seconds for an emergency suit. Once donned, a MIL STD suit can be worn minus the helmet and backpack for several days without penalty, during which time the helmet and backpack can be donned in 30 seconds. If caught by surprise by explosive decompression, a character must make a roll of 9+ to don a suit before he falls unconscious. DMs are: -5 if no vacc suit skill; + vacc suit skill; + dexterity. An unconscious character may be stuffed into an emergency suit by a comrade, using the same throw.

Use
CIV STD vacc suits are bulky and have clumsy gauntlets. If Azhanti High Lightning or Snapshot are used, they suffer the movement penalties laid down for vacc suits. Further, no dexterity bonuses may be claimed by a character in suit a suit, and all skills requiring fine manipulation suffer a DM of -2 on success rolls. Emergency vacc suits impose a DM of -5 on such skills, and likewise negate dexterity bonuses, but do not suffer movement penalties. MIL STD suits impose a skill DM of -1, but no movement penalties or negation of dexterity bonuses.

Use the Book 1 procedure for avoiding mishaps when in a vacc suit. Punctures in CIV STD or emergency suits cause loss of pressure; CIV STD suits may be temporarily repaired using the emergency repair kit by the victim or a comrade, throw as for donning a suit when surprised as above. A character exposed to vacuum loses consciousness after about two minutes, and cannot be saved from death after about five minutes. (The referee may care to make these times equal to endurance in combat rounds, and thrice endurance in combat rounds respectively, where a combat round is 15 seconds.) The wearer of a MIL STD vacc suit takes 1D6 damage if it is punctured (DM: - vacc suit skill). On a roll of 11+ on 2D6, the puncture is a faceplate shatter, leading to death in any kind of suit

unless the victim can be pressurised within five minutes inside an ATV, ship, building etc. Punctured vacc suits must be replaced.

Extended wear of vacc suits causes extreme discomfort and fatigue. For each complete 12 hour period that a suit has been worn, impose a -1 DM on the use of all skills by the wearer.

Combat
In general, the notes from the Use section apply, but combat presents certain special problems.

CIV STD suits give armour protection equivalent to cloth; emergency and MIL STD suits give no armour protection, but modified versions of most armour can be fitted over MIL STD suits (CES and Battle Dress are not allowed). Such modified armour is available at TL 10+ and costs are the same as for normal armour.

An individual hit while in vacuum takes double damage; in the Azhanti High Lightning system, wounds are increased by one level. Thereafter, the puncture rules above apply. Also, roll 2D6: 11+ indicates a faceplate shatter, followed by a head hit and instant death.

Skills
Any character from the Navy, Marines, Scouts, Merchants, Pirates, Belters, Nobles or Scientists is considered to have a minimum skill of Vacc Suit-0 for game purposes due to his training. Vacc Suit-0 may be taught in the same way as general weapon familiarisation in Mercenary, if the instructor has at least Vacc Suit-1 himself. Vacc Suit-0 is sufficient for most everyday activities, but not strenuous ones or combat.

AUTHOR'S NOTES
This article appeared almost by chance. The copy deadline for White Dwarf 25 was fast approaching, and we had one page left to fill. I looked through my campaign notes for something with the right word count, and voila!

Droids

by Andy Slack
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"We don't serve his kind." – Anonymous bartender, Star Wars

This article presents a few standard models of robots, which have been designed more or less according to the referee's notes appearing in the *Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society*. The descriptions of individual robots can be shown to the players, or perhaps photocopied and used as a manufacturer's brochure (the company is of course Rossum's Universal Robots, LIC); the section headed Referee Only makes some comments on characterising robots that it would be better for the players to find out by experience.

Dedicated Vehicle Droid
Also known as the crewbot, this is properly a family of units built at a variety of Tech Levels for a variety of purposes. However, all units have the following properties in common: The unit weighs 50 kg, and is armoured to battle dress standards to resist impromptu reprogramming by boarders. It has 25 hit points. The unit is directly interfaced to the relevant controls in the ship or vehicle it is to serve, generally displacing one crew couch or seat, but occasionally occupying cargo space. It has sensors as per the Mechanical Droid. A single-frequency radio allows longer distance communication without reducing the capacity of the ship's or vehicle's commo circuits, and the droid may examine the external environment through telescopic visual sensors, with enhanced night

vision provisions, active infrared detectors and a small infrared searchlight, or any sensors fitted to the vehicle or ship to which it is attached. A remote master unit allows the direction of medical rescue servos for reconnaissance or rescue purposes. The price and skill of a unit depend on its task and tech level:

TL 12 Cr	Expertise	TL 14 Cr	Expertise	TL 15 Cr	Expertise
105,940	Pilot-1	506,140	Pilot-3	1,006,640	Pilot-8
105,940	Navigation-1	506,140	Navigation-3	1,006,640	Navigation-8
106,040	Air/Raft-3	506,340	Air/Raft-6	1,006,840	Air/Raft-11
106,040	Ship's Boat-3	506,340	Ship's Boat-6	1,006,840	Ship's Boat-11
106,040	ATV-4	506,240	ATV-6	1,006,740	ATV-11
106,140	Gunnery-4	506,440	Gunnery-7	1,006,940	Gunnery-14

Mechanical Droid

Tech Level: 12. Cost: Cr 117,000. Weight: 200 kg. Speed: 75 km/h on road; 30-40 km/h on other terrain. Propelled by tracks, it has two light and one medium work arms. Sensors are equivalent to human senses in capability, and a voder/vocoder enables the droid to converse with its masters. It carries a set of mechanical tools and has a parts bin capable of holding up to 35 kg of spares. Its skill level is Mechanical-6. It is treating as cloth armour for combat purposes, and has 65 hit points.

An identical droid is produced for cargo handling, but instead of Mechanical-6, this variety is programmed to load and unload cargo into and off ships or vehicles, and report unusual circumstances such as unexpected visitors, fires, etc. This variant costs Cr 116,500.

Heavy Mechanical Droid

Tech Level: 12. Cost: Cr 122,520. Weight: One ton. Speed: Up to 40 km/h on good roads, 5-20 km/h cross-country. In all other respects it is the same as the Mechanical Droid except that it can carry spares and parts weighing up to 425 kg, and has 135 hit points.

Medical Rescue Servo

This robot is designed to operate in conjunction with a Robodoc (see below). Tech Level: 12. Cost: Cr 109,300. Weight: 100 kg. One light and one medium work arm allow it to carry unconscious humans or similar objects, administer first aid, etc. Sensors are as per Mechanical Droid, and a remote slave unit allows it to be radio-controlled by a robodoc and feed data about the patients' condition to the robodoc. A padded storage tray can carry up to 3 kg of drugs and medicines, while a comprehensive set of basic medical instruments is also carried. While its main purpose is to function as a mobile remote drone for a robodoc, the droid has a certain amount of 'initiative', so that it is able to fight fires and rescue injured persons from dangerous situations without supervision.

In combat, the droid is considered to be wearing cloth armour, and has 50 hit points.

Electrical Droid

This droid is for the repair and manufacture of electrical or electronic devices. Tech Level: 12. Cost: Cr 117,050. Weight: 100 kg. Speed: Up to 200 km/h on integral antigravity units. Has two light work arms, similar to human arms and hands. Sensors are as per Mechanical Droid. It has internal compartments containing electronic tools and up to 10 kg of spares or parts, and an expertise level of Electronic-6. In combat it is treated as wearing cloth armour, and has 50 hit points.

Robodoc

This is a large unit, normally fitted in ships or vehicles, and less frequently in buildings. Six light work arms with multi-purpose manipulators make use of three sets of medical instruments to allow for treatment of up to three injured beings simultaneously. Human equivalent sensors are supplemented by microscopic visual pickups, low-level audio pickups, a single-frequency radio for communication with other robots or persons, a voder/vocoder for verbal communication, and a remote-control master unit which may control up to six medical rescue servos. An ultraviolet steriliser is fitted to deal with bacterial contamination. The robodoc may be interfaced directly to the ship's internal scanners and life-support monitors, so that it can observe crew members and despatch servos to bring them in for treatment as necessary. It may also interface into the ship's commo units so that similar coverage is extended to crew members outside, if they carry communicators to act as homing beacons. Integral storage trays carry up to 175 kg of medicines, prosthetics etc as required. The robodoc has its own internal power source and is not dependent on ship or vehicle power supplies except to power the three integral couches in their low berth mode; for while the robodoc can deal with most circumstances, it occasionally finds damage or disease beyond its ability, in which case the injured individual is put into suspended animation until better facilities can be reached. The robodoc's price and expertise depend on its Tech Level:

Tech Level	Credits	Expertise	Weight	Speed
12	266,340	Medical-1	Two tons	Immobile
14	666,530	Medical-3	Two tons	Immobile
15	1,166,940	Medical-7	Two tons	Immobile

Should it be attacked, the robodoc counts as wearing cloth armour, and has 80 hits.

The robodoc can treat persons if one or two of their physical characteristics (strength, dexterity, or endurance) have been reduced to zero. If the character has sustained enough damage to reduce strength, dexterity and endurance to zero, and no more additional damage points than the sum of his endurance and the robodoc's Medical expertise, he may be resuscitated as long as he is placed in the robodoc within a number of combat rounds equal to his endurance. His endurance is raised to one, and the robodoc will place him in suspended animation pending full medical treatment at a comprehensively-equipped hospital of Tech Level 8 or higher. If the character has suffered more damage than this, he is dead.

Example: Shel Meldol has a UPP of 797AC8 and has thoughfully fitted a Tech 15 robodoc in the hold of his scoutship (reducing cargo capacity by two tons), with a couple of medical rescue servos. While adventuring, he is grievously injured, taking 32 points of damage. The robodoc promptly dispatches a medical rescue servo to pick up the smoking boot which is yelling "Medic!"; it has 7 rounds to get the dying adventurer into its low berths. It succeeds; we now examine the overkill. Shel's strength, dexterity and endurance sum up to 23 points; his endurance and the robodoc's Medical skill sum to 14 (7 + 7), so if he has taken less than (14 + 23) 37 damage points in total, he can be revived. Fortunately, he has taken only 9 more hit points than he actually has; examining the storage trays, the robodoc decides he can be saved. It raises his UPP to 001AC8 and places him in suspended animation to await treatment at a fully-equipped base hospital. Meanwhile, the Vogons approach the defenceless starship, blasters ready... The referee may opt to allow human medics a similar revival ability.

Engineering Droid

This droid is for the repair and maintenance of starship drives and similar heavy machinery. A medium work arm enables it to carry heavy objects up to 100 kg in weight; two light work arms are fitted for manipulation of tools and equipment. It carries sets of

electrical, mechanical and metalwork tools to aid it. Sensors as per Mechanical Droid. Specifications depend on Tech Level of manufacturer:

Tech Level	Credits	Expertise	Weight	Speed
12	117,040	Engineering-1	400 kg	50 km/h on roads, 10-30 km/h on other terrain
14	517,240	Engineering-3	400 kg	50 km/h on roads, 10-30 km/h on other terrain
15	1,017,940	Engineering-8	400 kg	50 km/h on roads, 10-30 km/h on other terrain

In combat, treat as wearing cloth armour, with 80 hit points.

Valet Droid

The valet droid is constructed at Tech Level 12. Weight: 75 kg. Cost: Cr 111,540. Speed: Up to 200 km/h on integral antigrav units. Sensors as per Mechanical Droid. It has two light work arms. It may function as a Steward-1, and in addition may serve as a personal valet, cleaning and caring for clothes, doing housework, making minor repairs and so on. It is treated in combat as if wearing cloth armour, and may carry refreshments etc weighing up to 4 kg in an integral tray. It has 45 hits.

Valet Android

Not actually an android, this robot is similar to the valet droid, but is much more anthropomorphic and in poor light can be mistaken for a human being. It has two legs and two light work arms, and in general is capable of movement and manipulation to much the same degree as humans. Sensors are as per the Mechanical Droid. Extensive social programming enables the robot to make appropriate comments on the weather, politics etc, unlike the other droids who are entirely concerned with their normal duties and unable to 'think' along other lines. The valet android is treated as if wearing cloth armour, and has 50 hit points. All such droids are programmed for valet duties - housework and the care of clothes, etc - and in addition, as Stewards. Skill and price depend on Tech Level:

Tech Level	Credits	Expertise
12	208,600	Steward-1
14	1,009,100	Steward-6
15	2,010,100	Steward-16

Warbot

Tech Level: 14-15. Weight: One ton. Cost: Cr 2,000,000. Speed: 200 km/h. It is, in fact, too large to be used in urban or shipboard operations; its normal use is to man bases on isolated worlds. For most purposes, human beings are cheaper to set up and maintain, and less easily damaged; they are also quicker and easier to replace, given a large population.

The warbot is armoured to battle dress standards with 260 hit points. Its size and power output render it quite vulnerable to tac missiles, however. Sensors far exceed the capability of human senses; vision is telescopic in all but the lowest levels of lighting, and infrared detectors allow the unit to 'see' heat emissions. Low level audio is fitted, which can pick up heartbeats at several tens of metres in standard atmospheres (greater range in denser atmospheres, less range in thin atmospheres). The droid communicates by a voder/vocoder or a multi-frequency radio with integral anti-jamming circuits, and has a TV camera for transmitting pictures of battlefield conditions back to base. It may carry

objects up to 78 kg in weight, without loss of performance, or one unencumbered person. Four light and two medium work arms are fitted; two have handlike attachments for field repairs, changing magazines, and so on, while the remainder carry an FGMP-15, while two of the light arms carry an autorifle and an auto grenade launcher respectively.

The droid may be ordered to stand watch, in which case it will patrol an area at random intervals and report any intruders or disturbances. It may handle any standard infantry weapon with the two general-purpose arms, and may perform all tasks expected of a modern infantryman, even in zero gravity.

Guardbot

The guardbot, security droid, or 'biffo' weighs 75 kg and is capable of moving at up to 200 km/h on its built-in antigrav units. Armoured to cloth standards and having 45 hit points, the biffo has one light work arm which may carry any standard human weapon of up to 8 kg in weight (including ammunition); sensors surpass human senses, being able to see in very low levels of light perfectly, and into the near infrared to detect body heat. Its audio pickups are quite capable of tracking persons by their heartbeats up to medium range. Voder/vocoders and a single-frequency radio allow it to communicate with other robots, a central command post, or humans.

The price and abilities of the biffo vary with tech level; at TL 12 for Cr 105,890, it will patrol a specific area at random intervals and report any unauthorised personnel or accidents such as fires, then await further orders while while observing the disturbance.

At TL 14, for Cr 505,990, the biffo will make random patrols and report and report any intruders or accidents; unless ordered otherwise, it will then attempt to detain any intruders using the minimum necessary force.

At TL 15, for Cr 1,006,190, the droid will make random patrols and report and report intruders or accidents; unless ordered otherwise, it will then attack the intruders (if any) with a view to causing death, or at least grievous bodily harm. It may also fight without penalty in zero-G combat.

Naturally, the ownership of guardbots is strictly controlled, and the least violent possible is always used. Guardbots are capable of handling any normal weapons like a human character, but gain no pluses for dexterity, strength or skill; likewise, they suffer no penalties.

Referee Only

General

Robots normally function under Asimov's Three Laws of Robotics, which they must obey. Despite their common usage, I shall restate them:

1. No robot shall knowingly harm a human or other intelligent being, or through inaction allow such a being to come to harm.

2. A robot shall obey orders literally and exactly which are given to it by a human or other intelligent being, provided such orders would not cause the robot to disobey the first law.

3. A robot shall protect its own existence unless this would cause it to disobey either of the first two laws.

Alert readers will note that these are not the usual forms in which the laws are quoted; but for game purposes, they are more accurate. Robots believe whatever they are told, and obey orders precisely. In this respect the referee's handling of them should resemble handling *D&D* wishes; if he can legally misinterpret a player's orders to a robot he should do so. This partially compensates for the robots' high skill levels. Robots have no initiative or common sense whatsoever in most circumstances. However, for their own

protection, if presented with a logical paradox they will clear their input circuits and behave as if they had not heard it, or alternatively ask for it to be explained to them, depending on circumstances. If given imprecise, impossible, or contradictory orders they will point out the situation politely and ask for the orders to be restated until they can be carried out.

Robots never lie, but nor will they volunteer information which is not specifically requested of them. Security droids or warbots are often not programmed with the first law so that they can carry out their duties; these will not answer questions which they have been instructed are secret unless given correct passwords and identification, nor will they obey orders from unauthorised personnel. Other robots will obey orders from anyone and answer any question as truthfully as possible.

In combat, any natural roll of 12 to hit will hit the robot's brain and disable it completely, provided that the modified roll would have hit and penetrated armour anyway. A robot so disabled is junk. Damage reduces the machine's ability to function; exactly how is up to the referee if he hasn't got the relevant article from the *Journal*.

Robots not specified as capable of functioning in zero gravity cannot be used in the icy vacuum of space, where lubrication is a problem and some of their metallic components may become brittle. Robots are affected by explosive decompression as are human beings; those armoured to battle dress standards can be exposed to space without ill effect.

As a final note, so far as robots are concerned (except biffos or warbots) all intelligent beings have an equal right to go anywhere or do anything they please, so long as violence is eschewed.

Medical Rescue Servo
This unit is perhaps too conscientious, for example, it has a penchant for seizing people who are, say, fighting fires and dragging them off so that they will be safe, leaving the fire raging unchecked. The servo is generally not moved by pleas to release its charges until they are safely out of danger, and may decide even then that they don't know what's good for them or have been deranged by shock. Servos also indulge in such habits as stealing cigarettes because they're bad for you, reminding you to dress warmly every time you venture outside, and so on; one particularly annoying habit they have is to follow people around since they never know when they might be needed, often getting in the way at critical moments.

Robodoc
The robodoc shares some of the medical rescue servo's faults, though it is more intelligent and less mobile and therefore more bearable. It thus tends to restrict itself to pompous lectures about the necessity of a balanced diet and regular exercise, and upon occasion will ask a character if he would like his appearance improved by plastic surgery while under the anaesthetic. If connected to medical rescue servos, it will also try to help wounded in battles impartially, and may ignore a player for an enemy who is more drastically wounded. In times when its facilities are overloaded, the robodoc will divide injured into three categories; those who will live regardless of treatment, those who will die regardless of treatment, and those who will only survive if treated. It then treats only those in the third category.

Dedicated Vehicle Droids
At higher Tech Levels, these become increasingly contemptuous of human crew members who do not match up to their own high standards. The gunnery versions are not prone to this, but are very enthusiastic and will continuously interrupt with pleas to be allowed to shoot something, estimates of the ship or vehicle's chance of destroying anything in site, and so on.

Valet Droids/Androids

The main problem with these droids is their humility and attempts to ingratiate themselves, especially at higher Tech Levels. The Tech 15 android in particular is always finding a way to fetch a tempting sweetmeat (which naturally brings it into conflict with robodocs), polish boots (often at the most inconvenient moment), embroider floral patterns on combat fatigues, and generally be so helpful that it is acutely annoying. On the plus side, it will leap into the path of an incoming missile even faster than the other droids - but will then make lengthy dying speeches about how grateful it is that the termination of its own worthless existence has saved the life of a Master.

Guardbot

Note that only the Tech 15 biffo is capable of actually injuring someone in the course of duty; the others will threaten occasionally, but if it comes to the crunch they will shy away from actually harming anyone. Since the types are externally similar, it is difficult to tell which sort you are facing, and they will take advantage of this. If faced with a more squeamish biffo, it could be diverted by for example threatening to shoot yourself unless it went away.

The second fault is not apparent until captured by a biffo; it will then spout unending saccharine morality, platitudes about the immoral nature of a life of crime, and the inevitable bad end awaiting all who stray from the straight and narrow.

I would like to thank Graham Liddiard and John Dongray for their help and ideas concerning robots of all kinds.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

These days I'm not sure I would allow such skilled robots in my campaign. A statistical analysis I did of Traveller skill levels shows that skill levels 2-3 are very common among PCs, so they could easily match and hope to better most TL 12-14 robots, which is as it should be for game balance; but the skill levels of 7 and up which TL 15 robots have are beyond typical PC levels. Mind you, skill levels over 6 are less and less useful; the minimum roll on 2D6 is 2, and skill 6 gives you a modified 8+, which is usually successful.

Note the relative cost of robots as opposed to NPC hirelings: A TL 12 Pilot-1 DVD costs Cr 105,940; at Cr 6,000 per month, you could hire an NPC pilot of equivalent skill for 18 months. At TL 14, the costs for Pilot-3 are Cr 506,140 and Cr 7,200 per month respectively; an NPC can be hired for nearly six years before it is cheaper to buy the robot. At TL 15, the costs are Cr 1,006,640 and Cr 10,200 respectively for Pilot-8; a robot is equivalent to over 8 years' NPC salary. Of course, it takes years to train a pilot that good, while the robot can be ordered off the shelf; but how often do you need more than, say, Pilot-3?

It's even worse for the lower-salaried skills; take Gunnery, for instance. At TL 12, Cr 106,140 buys a Gunnery-4 robot; you can hire an equivalent human gunner for Cr 1,300 per month, so the robot represents about seven years' wages. At TL 14, the numbers are Cr 506,440 for Gunnery-7; if you can find a Gunnery-7 human, he'd cost you Cr 1,600 per month, so you could hire him for 27 years before the robot is cheaper. At TL 15, a Gunnery-14 robot costs Cr 1,006,690; the one and only Gunnery-14 person in the Imperium (a Book 1 Admiral in his 40s who never learned any other skill) would cost you Cr 2,300 per month, so you could have him working for you for over 36 years before the robot was cheaper.

Finally, note that by spending about a million Credits at TL 12 and up, you can have an entirely robotic starship crew for a small ship - less than half a percent of the ship's cost. Think carefully about what that would do to your game before you open the factory doors. Is it possible in your Traveller universe? Is it legal?

Vehicle Combat

Most referees use Mercenary as well as the basic set, and many also have *Striker!* But there are many groups and scenarios where the emphasis is away from open military action, and many referees have neither the time nor the inclination to design *Striker!* vehicles for these. The following system is a fast and easy method of representing ground vehicles in combat where the scenario is run using Books 1-4.

Specifications

Wheeled, tracked or grav vehicles will have performances equal to those of the ATV or Air/Raft as appropriate, unless otherwise indicated by *Mercenary*. In combat, those vehicles not trying to flee will move cautiously - rarely more than 5 range bands (125 m) in a combat round.

There are three classes of vehicle armour; softskins are all civilian vehicles and military vehicles such as supply trucks, staff cars and so on; light armour covers quasi-military vehicles such as the Book 3 AFV and ATV, and also military ones such as Armoured Personnel Carriers and Self-Propelled Artillery; heavy armour is mainly used on Main Battle Tanks.

The cost and mass of vehicles is determined by comparing them to items in Book 3 and 4; as an added guide, a military vehicle must cost and mass at least ten times as much as it smajor weapon system.

Vehicles in Combat

Vehicles attacking personnel will use the normal rules; they will normally fire HE rounds from the main weapon, using the Mercenary section for Field Artillery as a guide, or attack with support weapons such as machineguns in coaxial or pintle mounts.

Personnel attacking vehicles also use the standard rules, at least to determine a hit. Softskins count as Mesh armour; light armour counts as Combat Armour with an additional DM of -1 per tech level over 5; heavy armour counts as Combat Armour with an additional DM of -3 per tech level over 5.

Artillery, ship's weapons, tac missiles, tank main guns and so on attacking vehicles must roll 8+ to hit regardless of range; the firer's expertise in the weapon is a positive DM; if the target's driver is evading, his skill level is a negative DM; and in addition, the difference between the tech levels of the firer and the target is used as a DM in favour of the higher tech level unit.

Any successful hit, regardless of the weapon used, allows the firer to roll 2D6. DM +2 if the target is lightly armoured, DM +4 if the target is a softskin; again the difference in the tech levels is applied as a DM in favour of the more sophisticated unit. If the modified roll is 8+, the target is disabled; if the roll is 11+, the target is destroyed.

Disabled vehicles may be repaired. Rol l8+, with DMs for appropriate skills, when the damage is first inspected; success indicates that the damage can be repaired in 1-6 hours, failure that the damage will require a workshop and 1-6 days to repair. The mechanic will know roughly how long repairs will take before he starts work.

Destroyed vehicles may not be repaired. Occupants take 1-6 D6 damage and escape the wreck with their armour, life support gear if any, and one weapon or personal item of their choice.

Special Rules and Notes

Military vehicles will normally be guided, even in combat, by the vehicle commander exposing his head and upper body out of a hatch. He may be attacked using the normal rules for shooting characters, but counts as evading. If he is hit, or fails a morale roll, he will 'close up' the vehicle; it must then roll its tech level or less to spot any character near it on foot.

Personnel in vehicles may be attacked directly; if so, they may count either their personal armour or the vehicle's armour at their discretion against the attack. Further, unless surprised they count as evading.

Vehicle platoons normally contain 3-5 vehicles. If expecting trouble, they will advance by turns, covering each other as they move and with infantry in support. The vehicles assigned to cover their fellows will watch for attackers, and if any are seen will pour fire onto their location while the target dodges for cover.

Referees must be prepared to improvise impromptu DMs and rulings as always.

Example

Scout Arrek Salvor (589929, Gunnery-1) is sitting in the turret of a Mechanised Infantry Combat Vehicle of tech 7. This vehicle has a crew of 2, we shall say, and carries a 9-man infantry squad. It is tracked and its turret carries a 73mm light field gun, a tech 7 tac missile, and two light machineguns - one mounted coaxially with the 73mm and one on a pintle mount for anti-aircraft fire. The vehicle's main weapon is obviously a light field gun; assuming it is for infantry support it is probably a howitzer which we find masses 1.0 ton and costs Cr 5,000. Using the ten-times rules, therefore, the MICV will mass 10 tons and cost Cr 50,000. This looks reasonable compared to an ATV, so the referee lets it stand, having decided that the MICV is basically an armed and armoured ATV and thus should mass and cost at least as much as its civilian counterpart. Its performance will equal that of an ATV, and its armour will count as Combat -2 vs infantry weapons.

Facing Arrek's MICV is a tech 7 Main Battle Tank, fully tracked with a crew of four. The MBT will be armed with a field gun (twice the mass and cost of a howitzer because of its higher muzzle velocity - see Mercenary p 48) which masses 3.6 tons and costs Cr 20,000. So the tank will mass 36 tons and cost Cr 200,000 - this is actually a bit low in both cases, but close enough to be playable as the mass will only be used for freighting the thing around in starships and the cost only when players buy one or two - which won't happen often, or if it does you are probably already using *Striker!*

The MBT's performance will again approximate that of an ATV. Its heavy armour counts as Combat -6 against infantry weapons. The tank will also probably have at least two machineguns.

Shouting to the driver to evade, Arrek fires the 73mm at the oncoming tank. He has a +1 DM for skill; the target is not evading (why worry about a little thing like that?) so there is no DM for evasion, and the vehicles are of equal tech level, so no DM for that. The referee decides that since the normal anti-tank gun of this tech level is probably a 105mm or 120mm, the MICV should suffer a further -1 to hit - he justifies this by pointing out that weapons of this size were in service as tank guns at the previous tech level, and so should count as tech 6. Total DM: +0. Arrek rolls a 9 - a hit; he then rolls an 8 for damage, and the referee decides to subtract one pip as he has already decided the 73mm is a tech 6 weapon. Result thus becomes 7 - no effect. Deciding that this is getting too close for comfort, the tank fires back, also achieving a hit. The MBT rolls 9 for damage; Arrek's player claims that although his gun may be tech 6, the MICV armour is tech 7, and the referee allows this. Thus only the +2 DM for being lightly armoured is added, for a total of 11 - a kill. The MCIV is destroyed; Arrek takes 2D6 damage and bails out with his cloth armour and rifle, having rolled a 2 to see how much this hurt him personally.

The rifle would suffer a total DM of -4 (armour) -6 (tech level) -1 (long range) +1 (dexterity) = -10 if Arrek fired at the tank itself, so he aims at the commander who is

conning his tank from the turret hatch. DM +3 (no armour - after all, he's usually in a tank!) -1 (long range) -4 (evading) +1 (dexterity) = -1, a much better bet. Arrek rolls a 10, -1 = 9, a hit. He then rolls 11 for damage on 3D6 (rifle vs character) which will knock out the commander. The rest of the crew pull him inside and close the hatch; the tank must now roll 7 or less on 2D6 to spot Arrek as it trundles past shooting up the MICV infantry. It rolls an 8 and Arrek lives to fight another day.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

> *Book 4, Mercenary, got an enthusiastic reaction from my gaming group and quickly became a part of our campaigns. Striker! didn't - designing the vehicles was too much like hard work, so I did a little reading (the single most useful work was J F Dunnigan's How to Make War) and talked to a few tankers (I was working with some at the time) and designed these rules. I still think they work pretty well for Classic Traveller.*

A Fleeting Encounter

> *Book 2 Fleets by Andy Slack*
> *Originally published in White Dwarf 49 - © Games Workshop Limited 1984*

High Guard vessels and fleets are fine for mass military actions and tournament play, but I have found that in normal *Traveller* adventures the amount of time spent designing them is wasted. Smaller units like the famous *Gazelle* class or my own *Explorer* class (WD40) have their uses, but in general can be replaced by ordinary Book 2 designs without any loss of flavour. Huge craft like the *Azhanti High Lightning* are negligibly large - their firepower and marine contingents are such that if they appear in a game at all individual characters in a small ship stand no chance whatsoever, unless the opposing captain is an idiot. The average game or commission is instantly unbalanced unless the heavy cruisers are kept off-stage - so what's the point of spending days designing them?

A fleet of Book 2 ships is much more deployable and far easier to design. It is also easier to run; because of the lack of screens and the way the weapons behave, tactics are roughly similar to modern naval warfare. Even with computer programmes such as those available to the vast Model/7 machines, lasers and missiles are roughly equivalent in effect whoever launches them or fires them. Further, because ships are not very resistant to damage, and because ton for ton a group of ship's boats have more weapons than a starship or non-starship, there is a strong incentive to having many small units, rather than a few big ones. From a game balance point of view, this means that instead of being pursued by a 20,000 ton craft with a meson gun the players' free trader is set upon by a squadron of fighters or ship's boats. They stand slightly more chance, but the referee has had virtually no design work to do and can concentrate on the scenario not the rules or hardware.

Fleet Composition

1 Carrier - a large vessel carrying fighters or ship's boats modified as fighters. 2-12 Escorts - type C or type T cruisers would be perfect. 1-6 Auxiliaries - supply ships, hospital ships and so on. Type R or M subsidised merchants called up for war service, probably. 3-18 Scouts - the familiar type S. 1-6 Couriers - fast, long-range vessels for carrying reports and orders on strategy, future fleet positions, etc. 1-6 Tankers - large vessels with vast amounts of spare fuel to transfer to other ships. 1-6 Assault Carriers - large vessels carrying marines and their equipment, possibly in low berths.

Deployment and Tactics

The running costs of warships will be much higher if they are moving around than if they sit still, so to save money any government in peacetime will keep the fleet in port as much as possible. In peacetime, the scout ships will roam around space looking for trouble which requires a fleet's presence, and if they find it they will report back straight away.

The escorts will also patrol randomly in the hope of nipping such trouble in the bud, blasting pirates, and so on. The rest of the fleet will spend most of its time at a naval base, strategically placed for quick response to likely trouble areas. Still, sometimes it will go on exercises to fine-tune crews and equipment; so assume a naval base has a fleet present 5/6 of the time, and if a 6 is rolled the fleet is on exercise. Naval bases will always retain some fighters to protect them, some scouts for reconnaissance, and some couriers to report or yell for help with.

When in war or exercise the fleet moves as a whole, the units have the following tasks:

Carrier: The flagship, also responsible for transporting up to a hundred or so fighters/combat ship's boats between star systems. It is lightly armed as a last line of defence.

Fighters: They do most of the real work. They attack enemy ships, usually with missile fire; support ground troops, serving as 'flying tanks' as well as maintaining air superiority; and attempt to prevent enemy fighters from doing the same things back.

Escorts: Their primary function is protecting the carrier from enemy fighters. If friendly fighters do not break up an attack, the escorts must do so as the carrier is not itself efficient in combat.

Auxiliaries and Tankers: Supply the fleet with fuel and other goods. They normally huddle around the carrier for protection.

Scouts: Primarily responsible for reconnaissance. They will jump into nearby systems in search of opposing forces and report back if possible. The fleet normally plans its movements some weeks in advance; this means that the scouts can leave the fleet in system A, search systems B and C, rejoin the fleet in system D, rather than the whole fleet sitting idle until a report is brought back. This also makes the scouts prime targets for capture by enemy intelligence, and since plans must often be changed, scouts are often lost from the fleet by appearing at the scheduled system to find the fleet absent. Contingency plans are laid against this, e.g. alternate routes and instructions to 'go to such and such world and wait for further orders', but even so there are a lot of lost scouts roaming around in a war. (Good scenario there, perhaps.)

Couriers: Required to carry messages back and forth between fleets and bases. A quite respectable 400 ton courier capable of jump-5 can be designed at tech level 11 for around MCr 250, which should be sufficient for most needs. The same comments about fleet schedules and routes apply here as were made for the scouts above.

Finally, each fleet must have its own marine force with it in case it needs ground troops, because it will rarely be able to wait weeks or months for troops to arrive. These too huddle near the carrier.

As can be seen the fleet has quite a realistic feel, and requires only a few hours work designing the couriers, carriers, tankers and assault carriers. In fact, most of this work can be skipped since only the courier is likely to appear in a scenario - a band might well be hired to hijack it to find the composition and route of its parent fleet.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

> *In 1984 my twin daughters were born, and suddenly the time I had used to design ships (amongst other things) went away for ever. This started me down a path of ruthless simplification in all my gaming, of which this was the first result. I came to the conclusion that designing new starships, while fun, essentially contributed nothing to the game - that the standard designs provide everything you need to run a role-playing campaign, and that the details of any ship much over a thousand tons just don't matter. Your Mileage May Vary...*

"What do you mean you discovered Skirrow's World. That was over 200 years ago!"
Mr Skirrow looked knowingly at Jamison, a wry smile on his face. "That's right," he said.

Players using other systems should find conversion easy enough. Prices, tech levels and effects given are rough guides; referees should feel free to modify anything they disagree with.

Methods

Drugs
TL 15; Cr 200,000 per month. A regular course of drugs voids aging throws.

Rejuvenation
The drug may be rejuvenating or simply life-prolonging. Rejuvenating drugs actually reverse aging and the character gradually returns to his physical peak as the doses take effect; in most campaigns this does not happen, and would require someone to keep records of a character's history. Life-prolonging drugs may either keep the user perpetually at the age when treatment commenced with regard to appearance as well as characteristics, or the user may grow old in appearance but remain healthy.

Signs of Use
If it is rejuvenating, scars may disappear. If appearance is not conserved, the user will appear a hale and hearty 285. In any case, skin or eye colour might be affected, or some other sign might be visible. Similarly, the drug or process might make the user sterile - permanently, or while treatment continues.

Addiction
Most characters on anagathics will behave as if addicted, but withdrawal symptoms must be specified. Most likely the character will simply carry on aging from where he left off until treatment resumes. The character may be physically dependent on the drug, however, and may die, lose psionic powers or become ill if he stops. Most spectacular and unlikely is that all the 'cheated' aging rolls must be made at once, and the character ages the time his youth was maintained in mere minutes.

Age Limits
The drug may not work if the user is too old - or too young - when treatment commences. It is unlikely that anyone will want to start the drug before 30 in Traveller terms since there is no aging before then. If the drug arrests normal body development, the very young might not be allowed to start treatment.

Disease
As a side-effect, the drug may make a user more resistant to disease, or vice versa.

Source
The animal, plant or mineral the drug is manufactured from and where it is found must be specified. The process must be complex and expensive to preserve game balance; otherwise everyone will use the drugs and some player will start manufacturing them.

Medicine

In WD40, Sean Masterson suggested that for each Tech Level above 8, the aging rolls were delayed one term; this suggestion is a good way to handle the procedure.

Surgery

Organ Transplants

TL 8; Cr tens to hundreds of thousands per operation. This is already done with kidneys and hearts; in the future, once the rejection syndrome has been overcome, it will be possible to replace lungs, eyes, livers etc. A trained surgeon, assistants and a fully-equipped hospital are necessary; the recipient will be incapacitated for several months. In game terms, the recipient may gain DMs on his next aging rolls for Strength or Endurance; since central nervous tissue is unaffected, there is no effect on Dexterity or Intelligence rolls. The DM size should depend on operation costs. Operations should be repeated regularly, say every few years at first, getting more frequent and expensive as the character gets older.

A real problem would be getting hold of the parts. High law level worlds may retain the death penalty, condemned criminals being broken up for spare parts. Since everyone needs the parts, the death penalty is voted in for increasingly minor crimes. Organleggers may exist; criminals who kill people to sell their organs illegally to transplant surgeons. If the law level is low, desperate individuals (perhaps the travellers) may sell parts of their bodies or put them up as security on a loan.

At TL 9 or so, regeneration therapy allows characters to regenerate lost limbs; soon after, growing synthetic organs (a kind of primitive cloning) is possible and the problem of obtaining spares lessens.

Bionics

TL 8; Cr hundreds of thousands to millions.

Bionics are not the path to superhuman characteristics; they are still attached to a body which is at least partly flesh and blood. Again, Dexterity and Intelligence are not affected; however, bionic limbs might be used to enhance a character's Strength and Endurance to former levels, or possibly a little beyond. Strength is the easiest to raise since Endurance largely depends on the heart and lungs, but other bionic organs are possible at higher tech levels. The maximum benefit from a lengthy series of bionic operations should be +1 or +2 to a character's original (i.e. as first diced) Strength and/or Endurance. A hospital is needed for the operations.

Bionics are mainly prosthetic, and are likely to become redundant when tissue regeneration and cultured synthetic transplants are available. A bionic individual will be dependent on batteries, with a possible loss of Dexterity due to the operation.

Coring

TL 11; Cr millions to tens of millions. Normally illegal.

This involves killing someone in (hopefully) perfect health. Perhaps the bodies of condemned criminals would be used. A superb surgeon and an excellent hospital are required. The character's brain and large parts of his nervous system are surgically removed, and implanted in a new body. The donor's brain may be destroyed or placed in a robot vehicle (see below). The transplanted character retains his own Intelligence, Education and skills; he gains the donor's former Strength, Endurance and appearance. Dexterity is reduced to the lower of the two values. Social Standing may be that of the donor or the transplantee, depending on how secret the process was. Aging then proceeds normally, in the new body.

Robot Bodies

TL 12; Cr millions to tens of millions.

At TL 12 it is possible to keep a person's brain alive without a body. The brain is kept in a tank of nutrient fluid, surrounded by life support equipment, normally wired up to numerous sensors so that it does not go insane. The equipment is fairly bulky, massing several tons; the robot 'body' is likely to be a large vehicle, perhaps a starship, directly controlled by the disembodied brain. Such a brain retains its Intelligence, Education and skills; other abilities depend on the 'body'. At higher tech levels, the life support equipment becomes smaller and more mobile, until at TL 15 a true robot body is possible. The characteristics of this depend on what system the referee uses for robots. Normally, robot bodies are used either for criminals (who must serve out their sentence as useful construction or earth-moving equipment before getting their bodies back) or those born hopelessly crippled, who then repay the cost of the operations by working for the government as courier ships, transport etc.

At TL 17, an electronic recording of a character's personality and brain pattern can be taken and replayed into a true robot body with no biological parts.

Robot Antibodies
TL 17; Cr millions.

These virus-sized 'robots' are programmed to destroy harmful germs, viruses and other nasties such as cholesterol blocking the arteries, and cancer cells. Injected into the bloodstream, they keep the user healthy from the inside. In game terms, they make the user immune to disease and most poisons, and allow a sizeable DM (+3 to +5 according to price) on all subsequent aging throws.

Clones
TL 13; Cr millions to tens of millions.

A character gives a sample of his flesh (often only a couple of cells) to the cloning complex, comprising a large hospital and computer facility, where it is grown into a duplicate body. The clone's age is accelerated to 18 in a few months, at which point it has no skills and zero Education and Social Standing; the rest of its UPP is the same as the character's was when he was first diced up, before enlisting. This, as it stands, is not much use to the would-be immortal. However, at TL 14 it becomes possible to grind up a character's brain and extract the memory RNA in which his memories and personality are contained; this is then introduced into the clone body, so that the character has its own skills and experience, but in an 18-year old body. At TL 16, an electronic recording of the character's personality and brain pattern is taken and replayed into the clone body, with the same effect. In either case, the character's Strength, Dexterity, Endurance and appearance are effectively restored to their values at age 18.

Matter Transporters
TL 16; Cr millions to tens of millions.

Depending on the way in which the Matter Transporter (MT) is ruled to work, it may be possible to produce copies of an individual without destroying the original - similar in effect to cloning. Normally, however, these will be exactly the same as the original, so nothing would be gained. At TL 18, the information being beamed from transmitter to receiver is edited, producing a younger, healthier version of the original. Typically, the character will be beamed to the receiver minus all the accumulated aging toxins in his system, allowing a +4 DM on his next set of aging rolls.

Unusual Techniques

Low Berths
TL 8, Cr 50,000.

Not an attractive method for the adventurer, since there is no point in living forever if you are in a drugged and frozen sleep at the time. However, rulers might store gifted experts in this way against possible future needs.

Psionic Powers

TL 0, Cr 0.

A recurrent theme in science fiction is the individual who lives forever for no apparent reason, because of a happy accident of genetic makeup or supernatural help. The easiest way to represent this is as an extremely rare psionic power; perhaps with a prerequisite of maximum possible scores in psionic strength and a couple of other characteristics. After training, ability would rise one level if the monthly advancement roll was a natural 12. The character can use the square root of his ability level (rounded down) as a DM on all future aging rolls.

Subjects

Problems of immortality in SF are not so much technical as social and psychological. Who gets it? Usually it is assumed the method is very rare and expensive - not for the masses, but only for the few.

Rulers

The obvious group to get the treatment are the people in power. The rulers probably paid for the research, and if it is only available for a few, will make sure they get it first. If there is any left over, close relatives and friends will get some, as will trusted and skilled associates. The reason for this is partly sentimental, and partly to ensure loyalty (by threatening to withdraw the technique) and avoid being assassinated in jealousy.

Skilled Technicians

It is unlikely to be cheaper to keep a minion on anagathics than to train a new one every 30 years, but if a ruler does so, such a minion will be loyal (or at least terrified of losing favour), and will be vastly more useful because of his vast experience.

Long Term Personnel

If a project requires continual supervision and is likely to last centuries, the personnel concerned might be put on anagathics. This applies especially to slower-than-light starship crews, or even faster-than-light crews if the game universe is vast enough compared to the drive speed. This is the lowest-priority group, since one can always get by with machines or avoid such projects.

Psychological Effects

Just watch your friends playing their 'unkillable' high-level characters, and you will see the sort of behaviour that is likely in an immortal character.

Risk-Taking

There are two likely attitudes towards taking risks for an immortal; either his extended life becomes so precious that he will do nothing to risk it or his immortality drug/machine. Such characters will not adventure at all if they can avoid it, and when they do it is with massive bodies of loyal guards against weak and surprised opposition. He becomes a master of the pre-emptive strike and the inescapable trap. Eventually he is assassinated. Or the immortal is likely to grow careless of danger and will tackle anything, sure that he will (somehow) survive. He may even start taking crazy risks just for kicks; sooner or later he takes one risk too many and dies.

Boredom

After a character has lived two or three hundred years, and seen it all, a feeling of boredom sets in. First, he may react against the boredom by doing weirder and weirder things. Often he feels long life is only appreciated when there is a risk or losing it, and so takes progressively worse chances until one finally kills him.

Second, he may become a jack-of-all-trades; a career, a marriage, a hobby last 20-50 years, then he gives them up and starts afresh with a new set. This is common where the immortality method is secret and known only to a few; the immortal then needs to change his identity every few decades and move to a new planet, or Awkward Questions are asked.

Third, the immortal can dedicate himself to some very long-term purpose or project, often a scientific or social project which will need lifetimes of work.

Problem Solving

As the character gets older he will see solutions to problems more and more quickly, because he will have seen similar problems many times before. Often he will grasp the answer before the question is fully stated, and so tend to jump to conclusions; but these conclusions will usually be right. However, the immortal grows less and less likely to explain his orders, more and more contemptuous of those less experienced than himself. Frequently, the immortal is very predictable in his actions despite his search for novelty.

Lack of Memory Space

There could be a limit to the amount of information the human brain can store. If some form of personality recording and transfer exists, the immortal will edit his memory every few centuries to remove unpleasant or irrelevant memories. If the immortal cannot edit his memory, he will be very careful about what he learns. For instance, he will not learn to drive - he can always hire a chauffeur, and cars are likely to be obsolete within a few centuries anyway.

Identity Crisis

This is the most serious problem, and arises if personality recording and transfer is used. If the transfer destroys the original personality rather than copying it, you are not immortal - just dead. There is now an artificial personality which has your memories, right up to the moment of recording (or perhaps matter transmission), but it is NOT you. Some people will be able to accept this, or will be unable to see what difference it makes, but others will get very depressed once they realise it. If the referee believes his personality recordings contain the characters' souls (if they have souls!) he may allow the character to use this method of immortality, but should persuasively put the opposite case to players to worry them; if not, any character trying to use these methods simply dies.

If the personality transfer copies the original personality - which one is really you? One of the two identical personalities is older, of course, but that one is no worse off than before and may well envy the younger version. Although both start with the same memories, from the instant they recover, both are separate people leading separate lives. Lawyers will probably rule that the new version of the personality has no wealth or property unless these are freely given to it by the old one, perhaps in a will.

Effects on Society

Oligarchy

As the immortal rulers get older, society is likely to become more centralised, more authoritarian, and more conservative. What's more, the government gets better and better at keeping it that way. Even with the best of intentions, the rulers will lose touch with the masses. Still, they will become harder to overthrow. The only real hope is that one of the rulers will wipe out the others, because one ruler alone must die eventually by accident or assassination. The next generation of rulers will probably not want to wait for their elders

to die, and may well try to kill them. In a continuously-expanding empire, young nobles might be given a ship and some troops and told to go and carve out their own fief; this is only possible near the edge of human space, because near the middle of a race's sphere of influence it is easier to grab a neighbouring state or assassinate pater. The young noble might be fobbed off with a provincial governorship.

Resentment

If immortality is only available for a few, the masses will resent paying for it. They will probably decide that if they can't have it, nobody's having it. In addition, there will be a few philosophers who feel the whole thing is not healthy for mankind. The mob will try to destroy the process and kill the users, which will drive the users underground unless they have an iron grip on society. The rulers in turn will bribe anyone competent enough to be dangerous with offers of anagathics provided they join the current clique.

Currency

Anagathic drugs might be the standard to which the Imperial currency is tied. Drugs are easy to assay, easy to dilute, small, easily carried and scarce. This would mean characters would be faced with a dilemma; whether to spend their drugs or take them. Of course, paper currency (or whatever) would continue to exist. Drugs would only be used for settling accounts between planets.

Sexism

People who live forever are less likely to seek immortality by proxy through children, so perhaps the birth rate would fall. Certainly if the process only works on one sex, that one would dominate society. Possibly without the need to raise children, or if the drugs arrested aging before puberty, the sexes would go their separate ways.

The Xerox Problem

If you can copy the personality once, why not do it twice? Fifty times? A thousand times? If a criminal is executed, the search must go on in case there is a copy of him somewhere, or in case the original is still alive and you only executed a copy. Is a duplicate of a criminal guilty of the crimes the original committed? Legally, each copy must be treated as a separate entity with regard to possession and inheritance. This assumes some method of identifying which copy is which - possibly a radioactive tracer or tattoo. Unemployment will rise still further - only the very best are good enough to be copied, and only a copy of the very best will be good enough for a big employer. Human life will become fairly cheap. If your top surgeon gets killed, you can always make another. If your ace pilot is sent on a suicide mission, you haven't killed him - you still have the original safe at home.

Scenario

Patron: Noble.

Required skills: Combat.

Type of immortality: Cloning with personality transfer, TL 16.

Player's Information

The band are approached by an obviously rich and nervous person who has heard of their reputation and knows they are offworlders. She is an immortal, she confesses, and in need of protection. Each time her new body wakes up, a recording is taken of her personality so that she has one available which is up to date. Normally she updates this recording at yearly intervals. Thus, she should remember waking up, living for a while then making a new recording, and so on. Instead, she remembers waking up four times in a row; her guards and technicians assure her that she was assassinated each time before updating her recording. She no longer trusts her bodyguard, and reasons that the local police have

already failed at least three times, so she will offer the players Cr 1,000 per month each to be her new bodyguard until the mystery is solved. They will be expected to track down the assassin as well.

Referee's Information
Of course, the patron does something very like this every time she wakes up, and the killer knows the pattern by now. The band are thus under scrutiny at all times by the assassin.

1. The killer is one of the previous four versions of the patron (the first) who committed a vile crime and intends to assassinate the patron in some deserted spot so she can replace the current version, which as far as the police are concerned is innocent of the crime. Naturally she will be able to impersonate the patron perfectly.

2. As 1, but the killer has already substituted herself for the newly awakened clone. She should make some slips so that the players have a chance to uncover the plot, for example remembering an item of news she should not have seen, or having been seen in public while supposedly dead.

3. As 1, but the police are aware of what is going on and are hoping to catch the killer and bring her to justice. If the current clone is assassinated they will not care, since another one will be grown in a few months once it is clear the patron is dead.

4. As 3, but after a successful assassination the police intend to kill whichever clone survives - just to be on the safe side.

5. As 3, but the players will foil the assassination attempt and kill the assassin in the process. Their patron will then be wrongfully arrested, and they will be charged with killing the innocent version of the patron.

6. The mystery is due to a fault in the cloning complex computer which accidentally killed the last four clones before the fault was completely repaired. The only way to test the machines was to try a new clone. The technicians are worried that the patron will fire them if she finds out.

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Protector, Larry Niven.

Surgery
The Long ARM of Gil Hamilton, A Gift from Earth, Larry Niven; *The Ship Who Sang*, Anne McCaffrey.

Clones
The Ophiuchi Hotline, John Varley; *Pursuit of the Screamer*, Anson Dibbell*; To Live Forever*, Jack Vance; *Time Enough for Love*, Robert A Heinlein.

AUTHOR'S NOTES
> *This was the first of a projected series of articles, each of which would cover a major science-fiction theme or cliche in depth. The birth of my twin daughters and a change in direction for White Dwarf (towards Warhammer) coincided, and the series was cancelled.*

The Staurni

Home World
The Staurni homeworld is Staurn, and they are rarely encountered away from it.

Staurn's UPP is AFB7870-C. It is a sub-Jovian world orbiting an F5 world quite closely, with two moons. Surface gravity is just under 2.0 G, and the worled rotates in about 18 standard hours. From space, the blue-grey atmosphere with its blue-tinted clouds partially conceals a world with royal blue seas and ochre and cinnabar continents, with many volcanoes and areas of hot springs. Vegetation is predominantly reddish-yellow.

The planet's atmosphere is a mixture of hydrogen, helium, nitrogen, ammonia and methane at a pressure of three standard atmospheres. (NB: Oxygen burns and explodes readily in this atmosphere!) Because of the high energy input from the primary, winds and storms are especially fierce - no-one ventures out in a Staurnian storm. Surface water is heavily contaminated with ammonia. Animal life is common, and of standard types. The world can be placed in any system as a secondary world, in place of one of the nearer gas giants; the system should be politically independent.

Appearance and Attitudes
The Staurni are approximately 3 metres long, half of this is a rudder-tipped tail. They have two arms with taloned hands, but no legs; they rest sitting on their coiled tails. A prominent keelbone and batlike wings with a 7 metre span allow the Staurni to fly. The head has a narrow skull with a protruding fanged muzzle and small rounded ears at the sides. The nostrils are hidden under the chin. The whole body is covered in a greyish growth that is similar to a cross between fur and feathers; a darker band of this surrounds the eyes. Clothing is limited to pouched bandoliers.

The Staurni are carnivores. They demand respect and must be addressed in an elaborate and polite manner in their own language. They will respect a character who meets them on their own ground, in the high pressure and gravity, rather than talking over a communicator. They are aggressive and warlike in behaviour. They are not gregarious and prefer to hunt for food. On reaching middle age, a Staurni loses both sex drive and aggression, and becomes content to stay at home. The elders are respected for their experience and wisdom.

Evolution
The Staurni evolved from 200 kg flying carnivore/chasers. Intelligence was developed to fight off a larger but related species which invaded their hunting grounds eons ago.

History
Technology was slow in coming to the Staurni - before they discovered atomic energy, the only way to smelt metal was in one of the numerous volcanic vents. Eventually, a planet-wide industrial society was formed, composed of confederations of clans expanding by conquest and slavery. A nuclear war followed, lasting quite some time; afterwards Staurni society attained its present form, over a century ago.

The Society

The Staurni social structure is based on a patriarchal male and his extended family, including his wives, cubs and relatives as well as retainers and their immediate relations. Staurni marriage is exceedingly complex both ritually and structurally. Each clan is heavily armed, usually with atomic weapons; its home will be a complex of underground, nuclear-proof bunkers and fused stone towers in a mountainous region. These are called Aeries, perches, nests or some such term, and are identified by the name of their patriarch.

A quasi-religious organisation called the Lodge exists to settle disputes between clans and deal with off-worlders. Its leaders are old males, and most work is done by acolytes - usually younger sons of patriarchs, with little hope of inheritance, who join the organisation for the adventure, the concubines, and the chance of promotion and power.

Technology

The Staurni know of jump drive, but do not use it. Their only spacecraft are system defence vessels. They make truly excellent weapons, often deliberately for trade with off-worlders. They are a common source of advanced naval and personal weaponry, especially kinds which are illegal in most other systems. Their transport technology is very limited, since they can fly themselves.

In Play

It is not recommended that Staurni be used as player characters because they loathe to leave Staurn, and in any case their life-support requirements are most abnormal. For non-players, the referee should give Staurni a DM of +3 when dicing for Strength and Endurance. Aging is at normal rates. Staurni may not fly except in the proper atmosphere - it must have the right composition and pressure. Staurni may acquire any skill or benefit, but their Strength and Endurance may not exceed 15 at any time. An unarmed Staurni (a rare thing) is considered equipped with claws and teeth, and may use either (but not both) in any combat round.

The planet Staurn is useful as a source of non-standard weapons, especially for starships. A referee might invent his own weapons for the Staurni to sell, or might rule that Book 4 and 5 weapons are illegal and can only be obtained from Staurn, and so on. In any case, players are likely to go there to tool up. Characters who have certain skills will know the following.

Those with Medical skill will know that a human being will require one dose of Medical drug per day while on Staurn to counteract the effects of the high gravity. If this is not available, after two or three days a character will be too ill and exhausted to move or perform any actions. A character who is not using the proper drugs who is exposed to Staurn's gravity will take 2D6 wounds per day. In addition, a medic and those with Hunting skill will know that the water, air and animal life on Staurn are all poisonous.

Those with Survival skill (or Scout prior service if Book 4 is not in use) will know that while the water on Staurn is polluted with ammonia, it is possible to obtain drinkable water by firing a low-intensity, wide-beam laser pulse from a hand weapon (using one charge) at a metal canteen of local water; the ammonia is then boiled out over a period of minutes.

If the band travel on the surface of Staurn, there are two kinds of special events which may be encountered.

Walking Forests

A large copse of trees, each 4 metres high, is encountered near dawn. As the sun heats them, the trees begin to 'walk' inexorably across the band's path. The trees move in this fashion in search of new soil, since they quickly exhaust the nutrients where they stand. When the sun goes down again, they will stop moving. A character caught in such a forest while it is on the move must make a Strength saving throw or be trampled underfoot,

taking 2D6 wounds per combat round and almost certainly having his suit torn. One attempt to escape per round is allowed.

Slaughter Machines
In their nuclear war, the Staurni protected industrial centres with robot tanks, programmed to patrol an area and kill anything that moves in it. After the war, some clans left the surviving robots in place as a free defence of their nests. Heavy weapons will be useless due to age; the robot tank encountered by the party will attack with weapons equivalent to auto-rifles and laser rifles, several of each. The auto-rifles are harmless since the explosives in their bullets have decayed; but the lasers are still operational.

Staurn and the Staurni are taken from *The Star Fox* by Poul Anderson.

AUTHOR'S NOTES
Poul Anderson had more influence on my Classic Traveller campaigns than any other writer, especially the Polesotechnic League and Flandry stories.

The Staurni appeared in my Spinward Marches campaign as inhabitants of a subjovian world in District 268.

The Motivated Traveller

Character traits for Traveller by Andy Slack
Originally published in White Dwarf 61 - © Games Workshop Limited 1985

A recent *WD* article described the idea of choosing objectives for *D&D* characters and awarding experience points for actions consistent with those objectives. Here is a similar system intended for use with SF RPGs, notably *Traveller, Space Opera* and *Universe. Star Frontiers*, having character advancement based on experience points, would be better served by the original system.

The advantages of using the system are threefold: First, it provides a quick, simple guide to the character's actions and personality; this is most valuable when dealing with NPCs and for beginning players. Second, it provides clearly defined goals for the character, often a problem for players, especially those new to the system concerned. Third, it provides a way to remove large sums of money from the game painlessly.

Objectives
On joining the game, characters must each specify 3 objectives. (Choosing 3 makes for some interesting 'crises of conscience' as the demands of various objectives conflict.)

Possible objectives are: Adept, Altruist, Hedonist, Killer, Miser, Rover, Socialite, Warrior. The character's goal is to amass Victory Points (VP) and so increase his Victory Level (VL), which represents his reputation and self-esteem. VP are totalled monthly; in any game month in which a character fails to amass at least as many VP as his VL, his VL is decreased by one; in any game month in which he amasses 3 times as many VP as the next VL, the character's VL is increased by one. The GM should award VP as he sees fit, but the following are guidelines. Note that a character may gain VP twice for an action if he has two objectives which would each gain him VP for it.

Adepts are characters devoting themselves to the pursuit of excellence in one particular skill.

An Adept must specify one skill as his speciality. His VL may never be less than twice his expertise level (in Traveller) or less than his skill level (in Space Opera or Universe) in this skill, and he gains a favourable modifier when studying it; a +1 DM in Traveller and a 5% chance of success in other systems. The Adept's minimum VL as defined by his expertise is not affected by VP gains or losses.

Altruists are those who strive to help others and do good deeds - a rare type of character indeed without some incentive such as this system. Generally they avoid combat where possible, not from cowardice but for moral reasons.

An Altruist gains VP as follows: 1 VP per student per week if he is acting as an instructor, 1 VP per Cr 500 x his VL which he donates to a worthy cause (GM's discretion is required in determining what constitutes a worthy cause), 1 VP for healing a character of a minor wound or disease and +2 VP for healing a character of a major wound or disease.

Hedonists enjoy the good things in life - good food, good living and other pleasures. Much of their income is spent on these things.

A Hedonist gains VP from Gambling and Carousing (see below). He also gains VP as follows: For 'High Living', +2 per month. For travelling High Passage, +2 per trip. Per Cr 500 x his VL spent on otherwise useless luxuries, +1 VP.

Killers are generally nasty characters who enjoy causing pain and suffering, and are ruthless in the pursuit of their goals.

A Killer gains VP as follows: +1 VP per minor wound inflicted on a character; +2 VP per major wound inflicted on a character. Note: These awards are doubled if the Killer wounds another player character. The purpose of this is to ensure that those travelling with a psychopath are always a little uneasy about it. A Killer also gains +1 VP each time he hits an opposing ship in space combat.

Misers are those who desire money for its own sake; they tend to be wary of any expenditure, however necessary, and will do almost anything to make money.

A Miser's VL may never be less than the logarithm (base 10) of his cash balance in Credits, regardless of VP gains or losses. Thus a Miser with Cr 10,000 must have at least VL 4; one with Cr 1,000,000 has a minimum VL of 6.

Rovers travel for the sheer joy of travelling, and are born tourists. They are usually intrigued by natural wonders and exotic sights and customs.

A Rover's VL increases by one each time he lands on a world he has never visited before, regardless of VP gained or lost that month.

Socialites are characters who make a career out of social climbing; their overall aim is to be rich, famous and powerful, preferably noble with it.

A socialite gains VP from Carousing and Gambling. He also gains VP as follows: For High Living, +2 per month. Being a member of the Travellers' Aid Society, +2 per month. Each time a Socialite's VL increases (or decreases) by one, so does his Social Standing. However, a character may not become noble in this way unless the Emperor grants him a title, which he will do on a roll of 12+ on 2D6. Whether and how this roll can be influenced are up to the GM, but the wishes of other nobles will have great effect. Note that systems without a set of social ranks must have them defined before the Socialite objective has its full use; VL could possibly be used as a measure of social class.

Warriors are those who love fighting, but fight not to kill or maim as does the Killer, but for purposes they consider just and honourable, and are normally generous and merciful to those they defeat.

Warriors gain VP as follows: For being on the winning side in combat, +2; for commanding a winning side outnumber n:1 in combat, +(n x n); for each hit personally scored in space combat, +1.

Carousing and Gambling

Carousing is an activity lasting one week and costing Cr 50 x character's VL. It gains a Hedonist or Socialite +1 VP. If two or more Socialites carouse together by mutual and prearranged consent, this is called toadying; the Socialite with the highest VL present gains +1 VP per other Socialite present, and the other Socialites gain VP equal to 1/2 the difference between their VL and the highest VL present.

Gambling uses the normal rules for the system in use. A character may make up to 6 bets per week of gambling, each of Cr 50 to Cr 5,000. Hedonists and Socialites gain +1 VP per Cr 500 x VL bet; Socialites gain +1 VP per bet won, and lose 1 VP per bet lost.

Alien Beings and their Objectives

Aliens seem best handled by restrictions on what objectives they may choose.

Every SF game or writer has a race of feline creatures with the codes of the Samurai: Niven's Kzinti, Traveller's Aslan, Space Opera's Avatars, Cherryh's Mri; the list is endless. Such creatures must choose either Killer or Warrior as an objective; they may still choose whatever they like for their other two objectives. In the same way, other races would be characterised by one objective which they must (or may not) choose; Niven's Puppeteers or Star Frontiers' Vrusk would be forced to select Miser as an objective; Traveller Zhodani would automatically choose Socialite (as all aspire to become enfranchised nobility); and so on. Traveller Vargr are perhaps an exception, and should be allowed (unlike other characters) to change their objectives annually, reflecting their changeable attitudes to life.

Non-Players

Objectives are easily selected for NPCs to flesh them out in the same way. It is easy to allocate them by die roll, but take into account that character's skills, characteristics and race. An extremely rich character, especially if a merchant and most especially if he has a ship, is very likely to be a Miser. A tough character with many weapons skills is likely to be either a Warrior or a Killer, and is probably not an Altruist. An ex-Scout, again especially if he has a ship, is more likely than most to be a Rover. In short, pick objectives for NPCs sensibly; choose something for them which would start them with a high VL, and allow them to improve that VL easily.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

This was an early attempt to formalise the character and motivations of player characters; in 1986 I began to use the GURPS system of advantages and disadvantages as a concise way of describing characters' motivations and personalities, even in other games. This was the first step on the slippery slope to converting all my campaigns to GURPS.

GUSHEMEGE CSB ACTIVITIES

by Andy Slack

HIWG Doc. No. SW04

ABSTRACT
An overview of the activities of Strephon's Agency in the fields of disinformation, memetic engineering, terrorism, and commando operations.

OVERVIEW
The Covert Survey Bureau (CSB) is the logical choice for Strephon's secret agency. There are also a number of interesting anomalies in Gushemege sector. This document discusses what the Gushemege CSB is up to, under these main headings: Disinformation, Memetics, Terrorism, and Commando Operations.

STRATEGIC GOALS
Strephon's Worlds are outnumbered absolutely in terms of the fighting ships and men available to the other factions. In any given battle, however, what matters is not how troops the enemy has, but how many he can bring to bear. The CSB aims to reduce the odds against Strephon's forces in three main ways:

- By tying down as many opposing troops and ships as possible, rendering them unavailable for combat.

- By rallying the undecided populations behind Strephon, thus increasing his forces.

- By attacking the enemy's command structure and communications routes so that he cannot direct his forces to the right place at the right time.

The CSB's top administrators are wise enough to realize that this strategy only delays the inevitable fall of Strephon's Worlds. The rebellion is bound to settle down to a war of attrition, and in that kind of conflict the faction with the most troops will eventually win. Strephon and the CSB hope that the major factions will cripple each other before the attritional phase sets in, or that they can rally enough high-population worlds to become the largest faction.

In the meantime, an interesting scenario might be made out of a senior CSB agent employing the PCs to carry out missions for him - not for Strephon's cause, but to build up a nest egg he can retire on when Strephon's Worlds collapse.

DISINFORMATION
Or, the time-honored art of telling lies about your opponents. Because of the slow speed at which news travels and the general chaos of the Rebellion, it isdifficult for most people to find out what is really going on. They will therefore tend to believe nothing at all or whoever shouts the loudest.

Affeldt suggested lowering enemy morale by tampering with the troops' mail. Strephon's agency takes this a step further by tampering with the faction's mail - introducing false information into their rival's xboat networks. This is done in a variety of ways:

First, by introducing Gushemege xboats into the networks of rival factions, carrying fake news. For example, reporting a battle or a planet lost when it was won, or faked footage of the rival faction's leader being assassinated. This is a dangerous mission for the pilot, but allows maximum consistency between the messages aboard, making the news more credible.

Second, agents in rival faction's territory invent false messages and introduce them into the local xboat network. This can mislead the readers. More importantly, it lowers the credibility of the other messages delivered. If one report says the battle was won and another says it was lost, which do you believe? This slows the enemy's response to information as he must verify its truthfulness before acting, possibly by sending another ship to check what really happened.

Third, destroying data banks, xboats, and couriers wherever possible. This slows the enemy response, because he doesn't know what is going on. He must either send more ships to find out, or have fighting ships escort couriers. (The latter will slow down couriers, because warships generally have lower jump numbers.)

In all cases, due to the excellent quality of Gushemege simulations, based on Lancian technology, the false data introduced by the CSB are not obvious forgeries.

In a more adventurous vein, carefully doctored news might persuade a low-technology, high-population world that it was cut-off, surrounded, abandoned, and soon to be smashed by Strephon's fleets. Silver balloons masquerading as orbiting battleships would help. A forceful landing by a gunboat or two carrying a CSB agent dressed as a Colonel or Fleet Admiral with a request that the world surrender could gain the world's surrender, if the agents were good enough actors.

MEMETICS

Pre-jump-drive experiments on Terra showed that certain ideas are infectious, spreading among persons like viruses and taking over victims' belief systems. These ideas are known as memes, and the techniques of studying and creating them are collectively called memetics. Where the vectors (transmission agent) for a physical disease include vermin, insects, and carriers of the disease, the vectors for a meme include media broadcasts and whispered conversations.

In memetic theory, social movements are side effects of the spread of specific memes. It follows that a group capable of creating and spreading a suitable meme can produce social movements to order.

Much CSB research has been targeted on projects to create new religions, philosophies, and codes of behavior which will dispose those accepting the artificial ideals to support the CSB's aim. These projects usually conduct their experiments on interdicted worlds with low tech levels, to minimize the disturbing affects of outside interference. The group of four type-X starports close together in subsector L house the major projects, close together for ease of comparison.

Creating a suitable meme requires, first, that CSB agents thoroughly study which memes are already active in the target culture. The successful pseudo-religion will make extensive use of existing memes to help it take root in the target population.

Second, the meme must be codified in a written (or other recorded) form. As self-replicating information patterns, memes are subject to mutation and evolution like physical genes, and standardizing the meme helps to limit mutation as the number of people infected grows. The CSB agent in place normally prepares and distributes the standard "Bible" for the new meme.

Third, the CSB encourages those infected with the meme to isolate themselves from the rest of the population, to minimize contamination from competing memes, and to protect the believers. The local government and/or religion will undoubtedly attempt suppression.

The most successful memes - from the CSB's standpoint - are those overriding a sophont's natural desire for genetic and personal survival. This sort of meme can induce untrained civilians to drive grav sleds full of explosives into Lucan's or Dulinor's local headquarters, or attack troops in battledress with sticks and stones. The sort of fanaticism needed can

only be generated by pseudo-religious memes, hence the CSB's interest in creating artificial religions, and even then must be continually fanned by agents onworld.

A possible scenario is that the PCs are forced to deal with a local religious cult inflamed to acts of terrorism by a CSB agent. Perhaps one of the party's favorite NPCs is kidnapped and brainwashed by the cult.

TERRORISM

Even in the former heartland of the Imperium there are dissidents - corsairs, terrorists, criminal elements, and so on - who would take up arms against the government. The CSB's policy is to contact those groups in their rivals' territories, and give them arms, money, and specialist advice. The CSB is not concerned with what these groups stand for; all that matters is that they oppose their government and are prepared to take action. Of course, should such action be against the CSB's interests, their supplies of guns and cash dry up.

This policy would give Strephon major problems if he won, because he will then have well-equipped, trained terrorist groups entrenched in his territory. Desperate and vastly outnumbered, however, he is prepared to take that risk and hope the CSB will have an answer for that problem when it arises. Strephon's main concern so far has been for the innocent victims of terrorism. The CSB argues that innocent victims are essential, as killing the spouses and children of rival factions' troops is not only easier than killing the troops, it has a greater effect on their morale.

The CSB recognizes that it would weaken Strephon's bid for the throne to be associated with this activity. They are careful to lay blame either on the terrorists themselves or on another faction. Atrocities committed in Lucan's domain will be blamed on Dulinor, and vice versa.

False Flag Recruiting: The CSB studies intended recipient organizations, and then poses as members of that faction. The Solomani Party is the main recipient of CSB support within the volume of space controlled by the Ziru Sirka. Like most other recipients, it is ignorant of the true source of funding. It might reject the money and advice if it knew where they came from.

Within Lucan's Imperium, the Scarlet Claw Society is a group of Aslan terrorists which the CSB funds. The agents pose as members of Dulinor's agency, and so the terrorists believe themselves to be fighting for Dulinor instead of helping Strephon.

Affeldt suggested arming PCs and turning them loose to create mayhem in rivals' territory. This is as good a campaign setup as any sponsored by CSB.

Disease: Another common ploy is for CSB agents posing as customs inspectors to board independent merchantmen just before they leave Strephon's Worlds for enemy territory. While aboard they surreptitiously infect the ship with contagious disease germs. The intent is to spread the disease into starports within a rival faction's turf.

The plagues used will be crippling, but not actually lethal. A dead enemy who only needs to be buried has less effect on opponents' morale and resources than a horribly diseased one who must be cared for constantly.

A possible scenario is to infect the PC's ship with a virulent plague in this way, perhaps while dropping off a passenger who is really a CSB agent. The PCs will become ill while being hunted as saboteurs or plague carriers.

COMMANDO OPERATIONS

The CSB maintains a number of highly-respected commando teams, which are trained and equipped at a level rivalling the special forces units of the other major services. Like

the rest of the CSB's operatives, these have a reputation for the bizarre, earned mainly from their use of trained animals, gadgetry, and deception.

Trained pouncers have been fitted with time-fused explosive packs and encouraged to build nests inside enemy starships. This has had mixed success, with some targets destroyed and other attempts destroying neutral or merchant tonnage instead. The CSB argues that even failures help their cause, as they lower enemy morale, discourage neutral merchants from visiting enemy ports, and tie down forces on security duties.

Small flying animals that nest in the eaves of buildings have been captured and fitted with incendiary devices in attempts to burn down enemy cities. These missions have uniformly failed so far, but all add to the fears and worries of those opposing Strephon.

During the early days of the Rebellion, attempts were made to peddle drugs to troops fighting for other factions. These were discontinued when Strephon's troops proved equally vulnerable - in many cases they received the drugs intended for Lucan's forces.

CSB commando units often travel incognito aboard free traders owned and operated by the CSB. A possible scenario is for the CSB to hold the lien on the PC's ship through a number of dummy companies. A CSB commando team in disguise charters the ship, and the PCs are blamed for the atrocities they commit at one port of call.

Once on-planet, CSB teams are supported by sleeper agents scattered throughout the sector years ago to support anti-terrorist and anti-piracy operations. The typical sleeper believes he works for someone else (whoever his recruiter thought he was likely to work for), and is exempt from draft by virtue of ill health, age, or professional status.

The sleeper's task is to provide a safe house where the team can rest, avoid searches, and prepare for missions. Stocks of food and medicine, and perhaps a vehicle, are also needed. These hideouts take many forms - a starport restaurant franchise, a cargo container ostensibly storing furniture for someone off-planet on business (and stacked amid many genuine ones), an unproductive mine on a nearly-abandoned asteroid, a lighthouse or emergency shelter, and so on.

The missions undertaken by a commando unit are often blamed on terrorists, and are broadly similar to terrorist operations. What distinguishes them is their precise timing and targeting, as opposed to the apparently random and pointless violence of the terrorist. These units are specially tasked with eliminating key opponents by killing, kidnapping, or discrediting them. To gain the proper perspective for how the gadget-oriented CSB tackles this sort of task, watch reruns of the *Mission: Impossible* show.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

This was my first and only piece for the History of the Imperium Working Group, a group of fans who supported and helped develop the MegaTraveller line. It is also available in the free download of Jim Vassilakos' Galactic mapping software, which is the de facto standard for Traveller starmaps produced by fans.

> *Fast PC Generation for the New Era by Andy Slack*
> *© Andy Slack 1994, 1998. All rights reserved. Originally published in*
> *Challenge 75.*

Traveller: The New Era features detailed player characters, with a well-fleshed out history behind them. Such PCs can take a long time to generate, perhaps hours, and the players need either a good knowledge of the rules or much attention from a patient referee.

Sometimes, though, you'll need to create a group of characters quickly - perhaps for a game at a convention, or for players who want to start playing right away. You can create detailed PCs beforehand, if you know you're going to be running a game; or you can give each player a stock NPC for the first session and let them create a full persona later on.

However, there are players who want to generate their own characters, without spending a lot of time doing it; I don't like to lose these people from the session or turn them off *Traveller*, so I've developed the method below as a middle ground between full character creation and pregenerated PCs. It's based on the observation that PCs, like NPC Star Vikings, fall into three main types: Ground specialists (marines, mercenaries etc - the party's warriors), space specialists (scouts, merchants, other ship crews) and covert specialists (spies, rogues, private eyes - the party's streetwise infiltration team).

Character Attributes
Roll 2D6-1 for each of the following attributes: STR (strength), AGL (agility), CON (constitution), INT (intelligence), EDU (education), CHR (charisma). If the total of these is less than 36, add points to taste to bring it up to 36. Roll 2D6-1 for SOC (social standing). The decide whether to be a space, ground or covert specialist; this determines your starting skills package, listed below. Skills listed with a number show the skill level you get; of the ones listed without a number, space or ground specialists may choose three at skill level 6 and three at skill level 3, and covert specialists may choose two at level 5. Note that it is not effective to pick both slug weapon skills or both energy weapon skills; note also that PCs may base energy weapon skills on AGL rather than STR if they prefer.

Regardless of which character type you chose, you now get three skill levels to allocate as desired to any skills you like.

The PC's hit points by body part are:

Head: 2 x CON

Chest: 3 x (STR + CON)

Each Arm, Each Leg, and Abdomen: 2 x (STR + CON)

The unarmed combat damage is (STR x Unarmed Martial Arts skill) / 10; Throw Range is 4 x STR; male PCs weigh 80 + 4 x (STR - AGL) kg, with female PCs being 15 kg lighter. Roll 1D6 for Initiative Level.

The PC now enters play at age 29. He or she has Cr 1500 x SOC to buy equipment with. It is possible to flesh out such PCs into fully generated ones later if so desired, in the same way as stock NPCs who become recurring contacts.

Space Specialists
STR-Based Skills: Either Slug Pistol-5 or Energy Pistol-5; Mechanic.

AGL-Based Skills: Pilot (Interface/Grav), Machinist.

CON-Based Skills: Environment Suit-2, Zero-G Environment-2.

INT-Based Skills: Willpower-0, Astrogation, Sensors, Survey.

EDU-Based Skills: Communications, Computer, Electronics, Gravitics, Gunnery, RCV Operation, Screens, Ship's Engineering.

CHR-Based Skills: None.

Ground Specialists

STR-Based Skills: Any three of Slug Rifle-5, Energy Rifle-5, Autogun-5, Grenade Launcher-5, Tac Missile-5 or Unarmed Martial Arts-5; Mechanic.

AGL-Based Skills: Grav Belt, Machinist.

CON-Based Skills: Climbing, Combat Engineer, Swimming, High-G Environment.

INT-Based Skills: Willpower-0, Farming, Navigation, Survival.

EDU-Based Skills: Biology, Chemistry, Communications, Computer, Construction, Electronics, Excavation, Genetics, Geology, Map, Medical, Meteorology, Physics, Robotics, Starship Architecture, Xenobiology.

CHR-Based Skills: Liaison.

Covert Specialists

STR-Based Skills: Any two of Slug Rifle-5, Slug Pistol-5, Energy Rifle-5, Energy Pistol-5, Archery-5 or Early Firearms-5; Mechanic.

AGL-Based Skills: Intrusion-3, Stealth-3, Machinist.

CON-Based Skills: None.

INT-Based Skills: Navigation-3, Observation-5, Survival-1, Willpower-0, Farming, Interview, Psychology, Research.

EDU-Based Skills: Biology, Chemistry, Communications, Computer, Electronics, History, Genetics, Geology, Meteorology, Physics, Robotics, Xenobiology.

CHR-Based Skills: Act/Bluff-3, Disguise-1, Language-9 (specify which language), Instruction, Persuasion.

As a final note on languages, I normally allow new players to note generic languages in the same way that they note generic contacts, so that they can pick their languages when they have a good enough idea of the local region of space to make an informed choice.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

> *By the early 1990s I'd come to the conclusion that just as fantasy characters fell into a few basic stereotypes with occasional exceptions - fighters, magi and thieves - so did science fiction characters, and that the basic stereotypes for SF were soldiers, spacers and spies. Maybe doctors or psions should be added to that list, but they are usually subclasses of the first three.*

> *Traveller: The New Era was a game I wanted to explore, but wasn't sure about; and the PC generation sequences were longer and more complex than any previous incarnation of Traveller, so this was developed as a short cut to support that exploration.*

Core Subsector

The game *2300 AD* offers an exciting alternative universe for *Traveller: The New Era*.

This universe offers adventures against a background of Earth and its colonies 300 years after World War III, the Twilight War. Humanity is dominated by the Third French Empire, which maintains a shaky peace among its jealous rivals - Britain, Germany, Manchuria and America.

Human technology in the core worlds has reached tech level 12, with two main differences from the Imperium campaign. First, contra-gravity technology has not been discovered. Second, star travel is by stutterwarp rather than jump drives. The heavy black lines connecting worlds are the only routes which starships can travel along. Unless you are using *Fire, Fusion & Steel*, assume that only jump-2 equivalent drives are available, and these can only travel along the marked routes.

Using *TNE* conventions, the sector becomes the Sirius Sector after the brightest star within its boundaries, the spectral type A0 star Sirius.

Following is data for Core subsector, only one of the many subsectors available.

Core Subsector (Subsector G of Sirius Sector)

Core subsector is the centre of human population and economic activity in the 24th century. It contains the Core proper (Earth and Tirane) and a number of colonies.
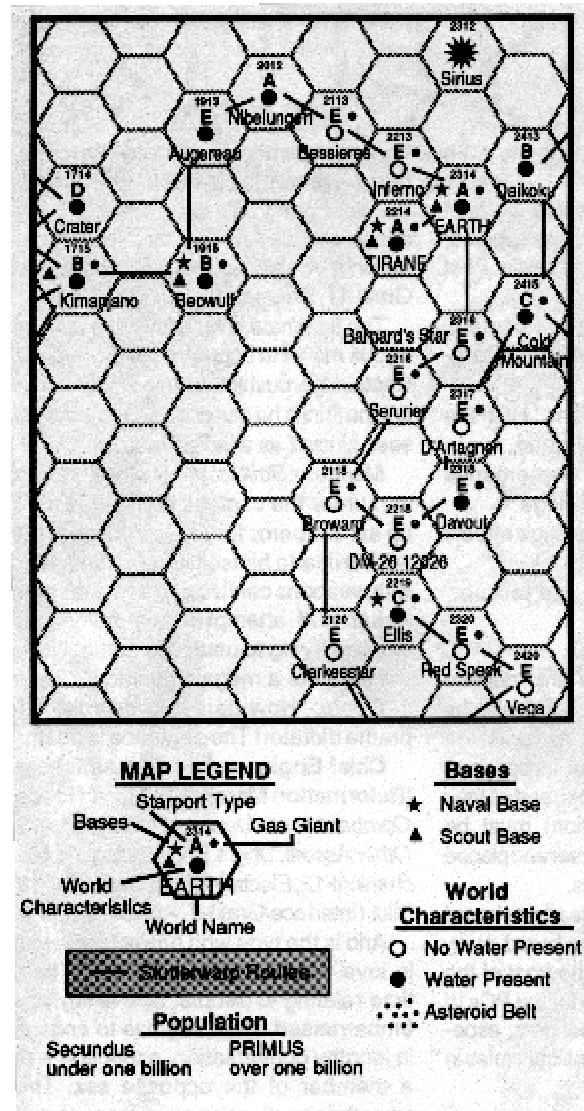
Crater is rated as an Amber travel zone because of unrest amongst the miners and ranchers, plus consequent close government regulation of many activities.

Kimanjano's oceans are a pre-biotic soup of polycarbons valuable to the chemical industry. There is no true life present, although some borderline cases have been observed.

Ellis' primary export is food, grown in large hydroponic facilities. Ellis is unique among colony worlds in being a full-fledged state of America.

Daikoku appears to have been colonised by intelligent nonhumans 4000 years ago, probably theEbers. The colony died out long before humanity arrived.

Cold Mountain's Amber rating is due to the fire risk from its oxygen-rich air (so strong as to constitute a taint except in mountainous regions), acidic water, and savage wild-life.

Name	Hex	UWP	Base	Trade	TPPG	Al	Stellar
Crater	1714	D751666-6		Po	A210	Br	G8VI, M0V
Kimanjano	1715	B869677-B	S	Ag Ri	706	Fr, Az	K4V
Augereau	1913	E6B0377-7		Lo	200	Fr, Ge	M2V, M8V
Beowulf	1915	B968777-A	M, S	Ag Ri	412	Br, Fr	K4V
Nibelungen	2012	A553766-B		Po	900	Ge	K7V
Bessieres	2113	E6B0366-7		De Lo	103	Fr	M2V, UC
Broward	2118	E730366-8		De Lo Po	104	Am	M5V, SB
Clarkesstar	2120	E000366-A		As Lo	100	Br	M4V
Inferno	2213	E7B0377-7		De Lo	201	Fr, Az	M8V
Tirane	2214	A867977-C	M, S	Hi	101	Special	G2V, K0V
Serurier	2216	E000377-A		As Lo	204	Fr, Ma	M4V
DM-26 12026	2218	E8B0377-7		Lo	325	Fr, Ma, Ar	K1V, K1V, K5V
Ellis	2219	C861666-8	M	Ri	402	Am	M3VI
Earth	2314	A867977-C	M, S	Hi	914	Special	G2V
Barnard's Star	2316	E7B0377-7		De Lo	221	Am, Ma	M5V
D'Artagnon	2317	E8B0366-7		De Lo	104	Fr	M0V
Davout	2318	E734377-8		Lo	204	Fr, Ja	M5V
Red Speck	2320	E000366-A		As Lo	124	Am	M3V, M3V
Daikoku	2413	BA54777-B		Ag	100	Ja, Ab	G1IV
Cold Mountain	2415	C676766-8		Ag Ri	A221	Ma	G8V
Vega	2420	E000366-A		As Lo	100	Am	A0V

Notes
Bases Column: M indicates a Military base, S a Scientific base.

TPPG: Indicates Travel Zone, Population Multiplier, Planetoid Belts and Gas Giants. If the Travel Zone digit is empty, it is a Green Zone; A and R indicate Amber and Red Zones, respectively. As the subsector has no equivalent of the Travellers' Aid Society, classifications are a general consensus of public opinion.

Al (Allegiance Column): Ab = Arabia, Am = America, Ar = Argentina, Au = Australia, Az = Azania, Br = Britain, Fr = France, Ge = Germany, Ja = Japan, Ma = Manchuria. Note that most worlds have colonies from several nations; the allegiance codes are listed in descending order of colony population. Earth is home to the various nations which own colonies, and many more. Tirane has colonies owned by Argentina, Azania, Brazil, France, and Japan, with independent former colonies of Britain and Germany.

Stutterwarp Routes: The heavy black lines connecting worlds are the only routes which starships can travel along.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

At the time this was written, GDW had recently published Traveller: The New Era, and were contemplating rewriting the 2300 AD line using that game system; I intended to pitch to GDW to be one of the writers on that project. I had been using Traveller style jump drive in my 2300 AD game, and had started mapping local space as a series of subsectors, so submitted this as an article to gauge interest. The project never developed, and the other subsectors I had worked out disappeared mysteriously during some building work on our house.