

# Queensland Wargamer

Issue #51

September 1999



ISSN 0159-0383

## Caffeinemenow!

Reading this is proof that, after nearly twelve months in the position of Acting-Editor for the club, I have finally put together an issue of the *Wargamer!*



As tempting as it is, rather than prattle on about how tedious and time-consuming putting this magazine together was, or how much I'd prefer it if members were to contribute more here (I'll save it for the next editorial), I thought I'd put this page to good use by sharing some commentary with you on the future of gaming...

*I am a bird!*

Sorry. I can see this page is going to degenerate into a confusing stream-of-consciousness type thing. [Note: do not write editorials at 1.30am!] I can see, however, how this could apply to virtual environments...

*I am a bird, and therefore I do not enjoy playing flight simulator games, since I can do that very well on my own, thanks!*

...that are so real, and so convincing, that games let you explore and interact with environments in ways that simply aren't possible today, and only exist inside the imagination. We will soon be able to interact with the characters of other players from around the world in fully 3-dimensional graphical environments with almost limitless things you can do, which is already possible to an extent, eg in the computer RPG *EverQuest* ([www.everquest.com](http://www.everquest.com)), and is one of the ambitions of *Antilia* ([www.EnygmaArts.com/PFoxFire](http://www.EnygmaArts.com/PFoxFire)).

Of course, there are many potential problems with this technology, and some of them are addressed in the short story *666 MHz* in this issue (shameless plug!), one of which is the grey area where the user's distinctions between reality and the fantastic begin to break down...

*I am going out flying now, so I am not gonna write any more! Bye!! Have a nice day on earth!*

*Whyrl Thom*

**Editor**  
Nicholas Frampton

# University of Queensland

# WARGAMER

No. 51

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Editor: Nicholas Frampton.

Contact preferably via email at [Whyrl@feathers.net](mailto:Whyrl@feathers.net), or telephone (07) 3398 3336 after hours.

All articles are ©1999 their creators. The *Queensland Wargamer* is the journal of the Queensland University Games Society — published irregularly through the years. Happy 21<sup>st</sup>, QUGS!

#### About the cover:

*Zulu Zebra* was drawn by the talented Melbourne artist Ceredwyn "Silverblue" Bensley. What's its relevance to gaming? Um, er... what's that behind you?! RUN FOR YOUR LIFE!!!

# 3rd Annual Q.U.G.S. Diplomacy Tournament

## 17-18 July 1999

Gary Johnson's report

Here's a brief summary of the results and so forth for the QLD tournament. We had our lowest turnout yet, with four locals from last year not able to make the event, but it was still an entertaining weekend.

There were three rounds, and we played on 2/1/1 board(s). I'm going to look into the advantages and disadvantages of running the 2000 tournament at Maelstrom/Briscon (first weekend of May).

Place	Name	Points (pts/round)
1st	Andrew Goff	29 (16/7/6)
2nd	Dale Edwards	17 (7/1/9)
3rd	Adrian Appleyard	17 (9/2/6)
4th	Ernest Cheung	14 (10/0/4)
5th	Peter Fordyce	12 (6/6/-)
6th	Mark Hodgkinson	6 (6/-/-)
7th	Darryl Greensill	6 (0/6/0)
8th	Christian Kelly	3 (3/-/0)
GM	Gary Johnson	32 (11/12/9) [non-scoring position]

Best Countries		
<b>Austria:</b>	6 SC	Adrian Appleyard (= Mark Hodgkinson, Peter Fordyce)
<b>England:</b>	16 SC	Andrew Goff
<b>France:</b>	9 SC	Gary Johnson (= Adrian Appleyard)
<b>Germany:</b>	0 SC	Mark Hodgkinson (A. Appleyard, Ernest Cheung, Christian Kelly)
<b>Italy:</b>	4 SC	Ernest Cheung
<b>Russia:</b>	6 SC	Andrew Goff
<b>Turkey:</b>	11 SC	Gary Johnson

For all your Games Society news and updates...

<http://members.tripod.com/~QUGS/>

**"IF IT'S HAPPENING IN THE CLUB, IT'S ONLINE!"**

# 3 Kingdoms - In the Mud

Guild information by "Axid" et al  
Introduced by Nicholas Frampton

A popular pastime (or, in some cases, replacement for the alternate existence known as "Real Life") for the online fray are the text-based environments collectively known as MU\*s (from Multiple User ..., pronounced "mews"). One such site is the MUD that has a popular following in Brisbane, *3 Kingdoms* (3k.org, port 5000).

## Connecting to an MU\*.

Some MUDs, MUCKs etc. have special clients optimised for them, but the simplest way to connect to any of them is using Telnet.

You simply enter the host name in when you're making your connection, and the port number of the machine you're connecting to (usually given to you).

The following examples are for 3K.

Win9x Telnet: The quickest way is from Run... in the Start menu, type: telnet 3k.org 5000

UNIX prompt: Type the same as above!

Other platforms: I don't know - please do tell!

A MUD is typically more for gaming than other MU\*s (which tend to be more RP-based or even just a variation on IRC), where you have character statistics, gain experience points, can fight monsters and die. On 3K you work your way up from being a newbie, joining a guild once passing level 5 and gaining valuable guild XP, and eventually acquiring High-Mortal status and even becoming a Wizard - a powerful character with special abilities such as building and coding areas of the mud - if you so desire.

The following descriptions of each guild on 3K was written by a high-mortal player on the mud, Axid, with assistance from others; printed with permission.

**Bards** are wandering minstrels who picked up a bit of magic in their travels. For offence, Bards can call on combat songs to cause damage and enhance their fighting skills. Other songs provide healing or inspiration to enhance fighting skill of others. Bards currently lack a superpower, but their old superpower, charm, is now "stun." Stun allows the bard to make a mob stop attacking for a few rounds; the bard may, however, continue to engage in combat. Bards also have the ability to identify magic items and some fun toys like the ability to juggle.

Bards use a jack-of-all-trades approach - no one power is immensely strong, and their variety is often startling in comparison to some guilds.

**Clerics, or Priests,** are servants of their deities who work powerful priestly magics. Offensive spells include spiritual hammer and flamestrike, to name a few, and damage types range from blunt to psionic to fire to cold. For defence, a priest can call upon magical vestment and summoned armours. Priests have healing powers without any equal, of course, which provides a strong defensive edge. Other abilities include the enchantment of weaponry, the lightening of objects, the ability to alter the alignments of others, the power to make followers "grow" stronger, and blessing to raise stats temporarily. The priest superpower, mend, permits the cleric to heal hp and sp from a distance. A cleric chooses to emphasise one of four spheres of power: magic, healing, combat, or summoning, and one of three alignment paths: good, neutral, or evil. Clerics gain xp, or guild experience, by spell and power usage, to ascend to the next step. Clerics must maintain an alignment consonant with the god he or she has chosen to worship. Also, spells require reagents, available from the guild. Finally, depending upon the chosen god, restrictions such as not being able to use edged weapons or minor armour restrictions may come into play. As for the intangibles, you don't have to like helping others to get the most out of this guild, but it might be a good idea. This is one of the original "Big Three" guilds, always having a respectable list of members on at any given time. Rumour has it that the cleric chat line boasts the frankest discussions on the mud. Clerics are always in demand for parties.

The **Cybercorps** theme is Cyberpunk meets the bionic man; these fierce warriors have enhanced their combat abilities by being surgically altered to carry weapons and other items in their flesh. Cybercorps members purchase "wares," so in order to gain power, a cybercorps member must have money. Offensive wares include Handrazors, Chainhands, Flame Thrower, Liquid Nitrogen cannon, and assorted targetting and tactical enhancements. Defensive options include Titanskin Dermal Armour and Titanium Skin Weave. Other choices include an

array of enhancements to strength, healing capacity, speed, and other combat characteristics. Docwagon is the cybercorps superpower; it fully heals the user, in or out of combat. The average Cybercorps member can deal out many different types of damage, has little need for weapons, and in general probably deals out more damage than he or she can tank. Originally coded as a PK guild, the Cybercorps doesn't have a lot of non-combat oriented powers, and as a result, the high-level Cybercorps member is very effective in combat. There are three divisions to the corps in a military-style chain of command. While the guild is due for a recode, Bake, the new coding wizard, has been putting in "teasers" to make the guild stronger.

**Elementals** believe that the best defence is a good offence; they possess purely offensive magic associated with air, earth, fire or water. Elementals can create blasts, their superpower, and give them to monsters, when they explode causing great damage. The elemental must choose one of the four elements as a sort of subguild, but every elemental, regardless of the element, can dish out the damage. When an elemental masters one element, he or she can choose a second. 'Mentals are completely lacking in defensive abilities, and can wear only rings, cloaks, amulets and other. While an elemental has utterly no defensive strength whatsoever, in return he or she possesses the greatest offensive powers of any guild on the mud. This guild is currently being recoded by Rastafan and Talisman.

**Fremen** are Frank Herbert's *Dune* dwellers (desert nomads with a culture similar to that of early Arabs with sophisticated technology and metabolic disciplines like that found in some eastern cultures). Their combat abilities are legendary. Other powers include paint dye for marking places and monsters; bats to carry messages; and the Voice for controlling monsters. The fremen superpower, poison, lowers a monster's weapon and armor classes. Between strong combat abilities and the addition of prana- bindu training, a fremen is (or was - more in a bit on that) a very effective fighter. The Fremen Guild code is specially developed to enhance party play. Now, lately there's been a lot of talk about how the last round of downgrades severely damaged the Fremen's combat effectiveness. Nowadays, Fremen are rare indeed, but give it time, as here on 3K, guilds never seem to stay underpowered for too long.

The **Gentech** Guild consists of scientists with genetic enhancements and biomechanical weaponry. In this, they're a bit like the Cybercorps, but the addition of

biological alterations, a different method of gaining powers, and reduced effectiveness of the mechanical implants all combine to generate a very different kind of guild. Offensive powers range from an extra arm to an implanted ion cannon. The Gentech guild member has a certain number of power slots per guild level. At any time, he or she may choose to research in an attempt to gain a particular power. If the experiment is successful, the Gentech member gains the power, no matter what his or her level and guild level. On the other hand, if the experiment fails, the Gentech member could die or even lose the powerslot permanently. The chance of failure is influenced by the strength of the power and the guild level of the experimenter, but a Gentech can choose to experiment for \*anything\* he or she wishes. Powers range from offensive to defensive to healing to miscellaneous, so in theory a Gentech can become almost anything in time. For this reason, the guild is sometimes called the Guild of choice." Gentech tend to start out weak, but ultimately develop into very powerful characters.

The **Jedi** guild is the newest of the guilds, and it features strong thematic elements. The Jedi can be a knight, as was Luke Skywalker, or a Sith, as was Lord Vader. Set in the time following the rebellion, and on ground important to both the Jedi knights and the Sith lords, the Jedi guild has much to offer. Jedis have a unique spell system which emphasises "brutality," the Sith having greater abilities with respect to the more "brutal" spells. However, a jedi knight can heal others, while a sith may not. A sith may choose to atone and rejoin the light side of the Force. Jedis can construct their own lightsaber, which powerfully enhances a jedi's combat ability. There are two variants on the lightsaber, namely the lightstaff and lightdaggers. Jedis have strong offensive and defensive powers, which can be aided by their superpower, Dissipate. Dissipate permits a jedi to convert a corpse to spell points and store those spell points for later use (separated from their normal store of sp). Be warned, though, because in the words of one of the guild creators, this guild isn't about power as much as it is theme. High level Jedis seem to be an exception to this rule.

**Juggernauts** are Battletech warriors specializing in defence. Their defensive powers are phenomenal, and include reflective armour, but juggers almost completely lack offensive powers. The Juggernaut superpower is missiles, which can target any non-hunting mob, or which can target any other player's target, anywhere on the mud. The Juggernauts are

divided into two clans, the Ghost Bear and the Jade Hawk. GXP for guild advancement is gained by being hit. Juggernauts are the counterpart to the elemental, and no one can tank like one. Low level juggernauts are able to go places which less defensively masterful guilds don't dare to go until reaching higher levels.

**Knights** are essentially Paladins who combine superb fighting skills with a strict code of honour. The honour system appears to be managed solely by the Knight player guild masters. Offensive attack modes include rage (which gives critical hits for extra damage) and multiple attacks in a single round. Defensive powers include the parrying of attacks. Knights can heal themselves or others by laying on hands. Other abilities include the monitoring of the health of an enemy and the monitoring of a room for resets using a falcon. The Knight superpower is their esquire, which can go to almost any player on the mud in any place, serving as an effective means of moving items around. Esquires may also travel independently of the knight so as to map areas with less risk to the knight. The Knightly emphasis on honour and valour means that the guild, for all its size, is close-knit. Knights are rewarded for putting others first. A Knight has access to a horse for carrying equipment as well as the Esquire. Knights must choose between good and evil, the former becoming Paladins and the latter Anti-Paladins. As you might expect, the light knight is a more effective healer while the dark knight excels in combat. Knights must maintain an alignment in accord with their chosen path. Knights gain gxp primarily through the use of their fighting modes, and every five guild levels brings a new "class" with its own power. Knights are one of the first guilds on 3K and they were originally coded by Timescape. The knights are also one of the original "Big Three" guilds on 3K, and often have greater numbers online than any other guild. This guild has virtually no magic powers whatsoever, but is also unequalled, or nearly so, in combat. And while, as one knight put it, "the knight is only as good as his equipment," the Knight Guild's equipment box typically holds an impressive array of weaponry and armour. The Knights' Guild supports full ANSI.

**Mages** are magic-users in the AD&D style. With over 100 spells, mages have a bevy of summoning spells and straight out damage spells, and many of their offensive spells have a defensive component as well, such as a horde of insects which must be slain before the mage takes damage. A mage can identify magical items, and can regen spell points by draining

the magic out of items. Mages have the greatest number of spell points of any guild. The mage superpower is Gate, which summons a demon or some other helpful combatant. Mages have a number of schools, and each school apparently is better at some class of spells or other, e.g. summoning, etc. Mages tend to be weaker at low guild levels but quickly progress and become quite powerful. Mages who channel too much magical energy run the risk of a fiery death.

**Monks** are uniquely spiritual combatants with unusual abilities; think of the television show Kung Fu and add some mystical powers, and you'll be near the mark. Monks are masters of unarmed combat, including the dreaded palm, which slowly damages a victim down to 1 hp. A monk is quick and agile, and their ironskin superpower renders a monk nearly invulnerable to attacks of any sort for short periods of time. Monks cannot wear armour or shields, though they can wear rings, cloaks and amulets. Monks cannot maintain more than 50k coins in a bank account or carry more than 30K coins (this restriction eases up as the monk advances). Monks are powerful fighters, and what they give up in the way of armour, weapons, and money is more than made up for in the strength of their bare hands and feet. It is important to note that monks must perform "mquests" for their guild levels, in addition to gaining gxp. As a result, monks typically know quite a bit about the mud, but if you don't like questing this might not be the right guild for you.

**Necromancers** are sorcerors who give up their mortal bodies in favour of undead frames capable of bearing mighty magics. The Necromancers are subdivided into five forms, each with its own set of powers, special regeneration techniques, and healing methods. Regardless of the forms, though, the essence of necromancy boils down to high regeneration rates, attack spells, and self-healing powers. From the most magical to the most physical, the forms are Lich, Reaper, Vampire, and Were, with the pure Necromancer falling somewhere outside the scale. Offensive powers are primarily spells, but also include powers which vary from form to form, and familiars, who can be summoned to assist in combat. Defensive abilities include the power of Protection, a magical shield which blocks damage, and assorted form-dependant powers such as rope trick, soothe, and calm to either end or escape combat. Necromancers have many other powers, including the creation of undead followers; absorption of corpses to recuperate hp, sp, and np; and form powers which

dramatically enhance regeneration. The necromancer superpower, Teleport, is widely sought after, and allows the necromancer to move himself or others about without having to travel through the intervening space. Necromancers cannot wear shields. Necromancers must also contribute coins to maintain worth, and equipment to maintain equipment balance, or face a loss of guild powers. Powers require reagents (available in the guild) to function, and must be memorised as well. Spell and power usage give gxp; gxp is used to advance in circles, or guild levels. Not only is the Necromancers' Guild another of the original "Big Three" guilds, it's also the single largest piece of code on the mud. The Necromancers' guild is, due to its complexity, a guild for thinkers or those who listen well. It also tends to be a fun and boisterous group, often helping one another out in adventures in the Realms. Like the Knights, the Necromancer's Guild has full ANSI implementation.

The **Newbreed** are mutants with psionic powers. There's not much more to say about this guild, though, because it's currently closed, though it's undergoing extensive playtesting and should open back up soon. In the old days, offensive mutations included an eye beam, mental blast, and mindsink (drains sp from an opponent). Defences included powers like a chitonous carapace, ironwill (absorbs damage), and Imprison. Other mutations and powers were Adrenalin (extra dex) and Hood (cannot be recognized or attacked; cannot attack). The 'Breeder superpower, Aura, gifted the 'Breeder or any person he chooses with a defensive edge. 'Breeder's were unable to wear armour or wield weapons other than natural mutant powers. How much of this will remain unchanged is anyone's guess.

**Warders** are Robert Jordan's Wheel of Time warriors, freed of their bonds to the Aes Sedai (mostly because 3K doesn't have Aes Sedai, though the effect is to give a warder some self-healing abilities). This guild is unusual in that the Warder has an autoloading weapon. A Warder can also attempt to dodge attacks. Warders gain enhanced sp regen through their link to an Aes Sedai (they get this even though there aren't really any Aes Sedai). The Warder superpower is Berserk, which enhances combat abilities at the cost of disabling wimpy and defensive abilities (berserk can be aborted). The Warder can train any or all of the abilities in the guild in order to develop whichever of them the Warder chooses to emphasize. At high glevel, the Warder gains the Heron Mark blade, which offers additional

powers. Finally, Warders may choose one of four Ajahs. Warders earn GXP by using their guild abilities. Warders are unique in having to fight instructors to the death (the Warder may, however, yield) in order to gain glevels. Not quite like the knights guild, Warders are nonetheless much more physically combat oriented than most other guilds.

**Witches** are sky-clad journeyers on the paths of Wicca. Well, okay, maybe they aren't actually naked. Witches have a wide range of offensive spells which use spell points to damage an opponent. The Witch's other major offensive ability is the power to summon spirits to aid in attacking. Defense powers include Calm (stops attacks), Guard (summons a spirit to defend while the Witch drinks a potion), and Shroud (protection). It is a Witch's miscellaneous powers that really make the witch, though: a witch can create a Cauldron (holds things), Enhance weaponry (makes weapons more powerful), and create potions of heroism, invisibility and healing. The Witch's healing potions are the major thing about being a Witch. When a Witch attains glevel 10, he or she must choose a Path, and maintain a good, neutral, or evil alignment. Witches may not borrow too much from the Guild pentacle without donating to replace equipment, or they lose their powers. The Witch superpower, Charm, holds spell points at the current level (i.e. no dropping of sp in spite of the use of them) until the charm is exhausted. Witches have access to the power of flight in order to control their actions through a number of rounds into the future. Witches are in covens on the basis of who recruited them, and that covens have special chat lines. Witches gain GXP by using their spells and powers. White path Witches gain more GXP through healing, Black pathers by using spells, and Grey pathers by some combination of the two. Witches can, if properly prepared with healing potions and the like, take on mobs well outside of the range one might otherwise expect. The Witches Guild has traditionally been a small and close-knit group, well known for their friendliness to one another. Though their membership has risen dramatically, they are still a friendly group.

### Conclusion

There are a number of other guilds in the works in various stages of playtesting or coding (such as the *Garou* guild, based upon *Werewolf: The Apocalypse* RPG), but the current variety should provide with much to think about when it comes time to make a choice.



*This short story is the best one I wrote whilst at high school, and is probably the only one I have that is even remotely related to gaming. I'm a little surprised that the technology hasn't yet outdated this story! It received second prize in the 12-18 years category of the "Amateur Writers Encouragement Programme" competition number 11 (August 1997).*

"Aw, wicked! Mate, 'Hi' VeloCT totally creams the competition!" Ethan bubbled with excitement as he adjusted the virtual reality headset in front of his eyes and shuffled on his bed.

"I'm not convinced," stated Darren Lindsay blandly, staring at his classmate. Ethan was one of the first in the world to purchase the latest development from Brisbane-based company Velo Computer Technologies.

"The processor runs at six-sixty-six mega hertz - three times faster than any PC! The display is twenty-four bit colour at super high definition, the sound is totally realistic, and it uses only the best in optical disk technology!"

Darren snorted. "Is that good?"

"Damn good! And it's a steal at two hundred dollars! Here, d'ya wanna have a go?" He offered the headset and controller to Darren.

"No, thanks. I don't see the point in computer games. They're a waste of time."

"Too bad. You've missed your chance to check this out before anyone else! This'll be bigger than TV!"

The buzz for Hi VeloCT in the media had been overwhelming. With the simplicity of a games console, all the capabilities of any personal computer, and a light speed satellite link to the Internet, the unit "heralded a revolution in entertainment, information, business and general society".

Released in the third week of December in Australia, more than five million machines were placed in people's Christmas stockings. Manufacturing plants were promptly set up to meet demand in Japan, the US, and Europe; all at full capacity by the end of February.

Hi VeloCT consisted of a sleek black box the size of a hardcover novel, a virtual reality wrap-around headset with built-in headphones and microphone, a typical hand-held controller (comprising an analogue joystick, a trigger button, plus a dozen other buttons), an in-built satellite phone, an optical disk drive, full size keyboard, plus external ports to connect extra equipment, such as a printer, monitor or a projector.

Businesses were phasing out their instantly-redundant computers, replacing them with the economical and efficient "worker bees" of the technological world. Schools were shrinking rapidly as both students and teachers discovered the benefits of lessons in the virtual classroom.

By mid-April, about the time that Darren returned to Ethan's house, all primary and secondary schools had shut down, television lost popularity, telephones had been replaced with "VeloCT Chat Lines", and shopping centres were totally deserted.

"Darren! Long time, no see!"

"Hey, Ethan," Darren greeted.

"So...what do you think of Hi VeloCT now???" Ethan probed.

"Uh-" An electronic tone interrupted the reply.

"Hello?" answered Ethan.

A video screen flickered with a tabulated image of eight teenagers. One of them smiled - Owen.

"Ah! Darren! There you are! We've been looking all over the 'net for you."

Darren's expression remained unchanged.

"It seems we can't find 'Darren Lindsay' in any directories or search engines. It's almost as if you're one of those non-entities who aren't *connected!*" Owen's goggled face chuckled, then the others joined in.

Matter-of-factly, Darren stated, "Actually, I don't even have a Hi VeloCT! I think they're bad for you."

There was a stunned silence.

"You are...joking, right?" Owen managed a grin, but the rest of his body betrayed his shock.

"No."

The blood drained from Owen's face, then he quickly slapped the pad in front of him, and his image vanished from Ethan's video screen. Every other students' images flashed to black in rapid succession, to leave an empty void.

Ethan turned away from Darren, to gaze at nothing.

"Whoa! What's their-"

"Get out," Ethan murmured.

Perplexed, Darren asked, "What do-"

"GET OUT!!!" Ethan raged. Silently, Darren slipped out of the room, to leave his former friend in solitary confinement.

"I can't believe Hi VeloCT has only been around for a year," Darren's mother chattered to her isolated and depressed son, as she read the newspaper headline. "I can't even remember what life was like before it! Hurry up and finish your breakfast, then get stuck into that school work. I can't understand why you won't do your study on the 'net. It's so much easier!"

"Hmph! That's another good reason not to!" Darren shovelled another load of muesli into his mouth.

"Tut, tut, tut. Another suicide! The paper's been full of doom and gloom lately - then again, what's new?"

The weather was perfect that afternoon for a stroll through the park, and Darren had little else to do. In his three-kilometre walk to the park, he thought it odd that no one else was around. There weren't even cars on the main arterial road - which twelve months ago would have been chock-a-block.

Serenity abounded in the park. He let the peacefulness wash over him. It reminded him of the good old days when his friends-

"Oi! What are you doing here?!"

Darren spun around to face two police officers. The one who addressed him looked stressed and surly.

"Uh, just going for a walk," Darren casually replied.

"Listen, kid. You don't just 'go for a walk' around here, what with all the dead bodies and loony people around the place."

The other officer concurred, "Yeah, go back home and play on your HV."

"But I don't have a Hi VeloCT machine!" informed Darren.

"Yeah - sure, kid!" the first policeman said sarcastically. "Everyone's got one. They're just too addictive not to have one."

"No, seriously. I don't."

The second officer mumbled, "Do you think we should have him committed?"

"Of course not - the mental institutes are overflowing as it is! Besides, we've got no evidence to suggest he's a nutcase."

"If he's telling the truth - that he's not *connected* - he could be 'one of those'..."

The surly officer growled at Darren, "C'mon - I'll give you a ride home. I've investigated enough homicides for one day!"

Darren vigorously cycled eleven kilometres from his house in Norman Park to Velo Computer Technology's headquarters in Toowong. Yesterday's encounter with the police prompted him to meet face-to-face with the manager of the corporate giant.

He chained his bicycle to a pole outside the workers' entrance, then went into the foyer.

The security guard approached him. "This is a restricted area. I must ask you to leave."

"Um, I'm here on work experience," lied Darren. "This is my first day, I was late and forgot my ID, and I don't know where to go, so could you please help me?"

"Yeah - sure, I'll get you a visitor ID..." He reached into his pocket, withdrew an orange slip, dated it, then handed it to Darren. "Where are you working?"

"I'm studying business management, and I want to learn from the best!" replied Darren, convincingly.

"That's great! The boss's office is through that door, across the factory floor, and up the stairwell at the far end."

"Thanks!" smiled Darren.

"No problem."

To avoid recognition, Darren went into the adjacent storeroom, disabled an HV and placed it on his face, before proceeding further. He penetrated the cavernous factory.

The place swarmed with workers manufacturing silicon chips, assembling products, programming software - and monitoring the 'net! At the far end was a group of several hundred HV "experts" manipulating the flow of data, listening into private conversations, and entering loop-holes in security. Darren glanced up to see a large stained glass window overlooking the floor. He hurried his pace, ascending the stairwell.

A short, grotesque secretary barked, "Who are you!?"

"I'm here to report to the manager. I have formulated a remedy for the diminishing orbit of a critical low-orbiting satellite, and it is imperative that I see him immediately," concocted Darren.

"What's wrong with your helmet?" she queried.

"Oh - the battery just died!" he answered, curious of the question.

"Please remove your helmet, or I will call security."

Darren guiltily revealed his face.

The secretary smiled. "He's been expecting you!"

Cautiously pushing open the frosted glass door, he entered the darkened lair. The door slammed behind him.

Supercomputers lined the walls, lights flashing, animated diagrams displayed on dozens of monitors. Perched on a leather throne, the ominous figure dominated the room, facing out through the stained glass, away from the arrival.

"Finally we meet, *Darren!*" the manager spat.

Darren shuddered. "Your product is pure evil. It is brainwashing and killing people."

The boss continued to glare at his band of "net puppeteers", pulling the various strings of communication, possessing Hi VeloCT users directly through the addictive link, tampering with their neural pathways...

"I know," he replied.

"And it is defective."

He swivelled his chair around. His deeply penetrating eyes pierced into Darren's soul, chilling him to the bone. "Who are *you* to judge my ability to murder?"

Darren soared backwards from the gargantuan impact of a lightning bolt. Dazed, he scrambled away across the floor.

"Suffer in eternal damnation, *Darren Lindsay!*"

The mortal lunged for a computer as the fiend took aim, then fired another bolt. The electrons surged through Darren, short-circuited the CPU, then travelled through the electric cables and overloaded the factory's power supply. The circuits on every silicon chip fused together, before darkness enveloped the complex.

"NOOOOO!!!!" shrieked the manager. Darren chuckled.

"You're finished, 'evil dude'! Your precious network has been destroyed!"

The manager retaliated, "You *fool!* By the very nature of the Internet, there is no Achilles heel - my HV network will continue to function without this facility!"

"But haven't you lost control? It may still work, but do you still control it?" The dull red glow of the emergency lighting enabled Darren to see the tyrant again; he was slumped forward on the desk.

"I'm...weakening..." he murmured.

"As I suspected - without the 'bad vibes' you get from the 'net, your 'aura' loses its power and you wither away to nothing!" Darren turned away from him, and started toward the door.

"Wait! Help...me...!" the manager gasped.

"Sorry - I can't help. You need to see a parapsychologist. Besides, I have to work out a way of rectifying the damage you have done to this civilisation." Darren pushed open the door.

"How are you ... going to ... get people to ... stop using ... HV? Impose ... a..." He half-chuckled, half-coughed. "...time...restriction?"

"Then I would be no better than you! There is no way to restore things to the way they were - we have to learn and adapt...not conquer." Darren left; with no remorse of leaving the devil to gasp his final breath.

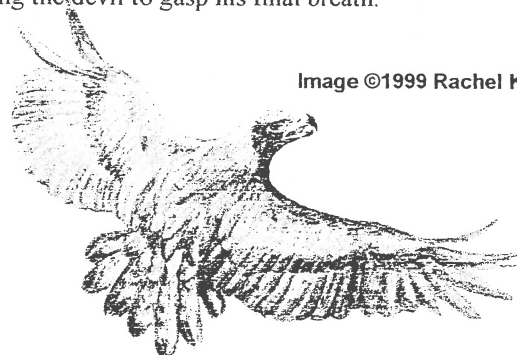


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# Don't Be a Vidiot

## What Computer Game Designers Can Learn From Non-Electronic Games

by Greg Costikyan. Reprinted with permission.

*This is a speech I gave at the 1998 Game Developers Conference ([www.gdconf.com](http://www.gdconf.com)).*

When you look at our industry, it's easy to get worried about the enormous number of dull, derivative titles, and the paucity of innovation in a field that was once known for originality and creativity. The best-seller lists are filled with licensed drivel – Barbie titles, games based on old mass-market boardgames. Developers produce shooters and real-time strategy games in enormous numbers, often finding it hard to articulate how their games differ from other games in the same genre because, fundamentally, they don't, much. Other sub-genres stagger on – graphic adventures, computer roleplaying games, flight sims – but innovation seems increasingly driven by technology rather than creativity in game design – as if a 3D graphic adventure is somehow qualitatively different from a 2D game.

For someone familiar with both software and games, this is a puzzling development. Software is an enormously plastic medium. You can do almost anything with software. If you can define it, you can develop it. And games are an enormously plastic medium, too; there is a staggering variety of games, an entire universe of weird and wonderful gaming styles.

There are those who claim that the consolidation of computer gaming into a handful of recognized sub-genres is merely indication of maturation of the industry, that we have now established the types of games people want to play, and that in future our task is to ring the changes, play with the tropes, explore the variations permissible within those established genres. I have a hard time believing that this is true. This field has only existed for twenty years. And the capabilities of the machines we work with grows by leaps and bounds, year in and year out. If an artistic form as old as the novel continues to see works of amazing creativity every year, then surely it is too soon so say that we have explored the basic configurations of the computer game.

The question is one worth thinking about, not only because we, as artists, wish to accomplish innovative and creative work; but also because the history of our industry shows that the games that succeed best, that spur enormous movement down the retail pipe, are often those that are truly novel. That was true of *BALANCE OF POWER* and *SIM CITY* and *M.U.L.E.* and *TETRIS* and *DOOM* and *MYST* and *COMMAND & CONQUER*; and it was true of *DEER HUNTER*, which for all its flaws as a game *qua* game was still something we hadn't seen before, not a mere variant on the same-old same-old.

But if this is true, if the plasticity of software and the plasticity of the game mean truly novel products are possible, and if the market often rewards innovation, what

is it that conspires to channel our efforts into reworking the same basic themes again and again? What is it about our industry that makes it so dull?

One factor is unquestionably the conservatism of publishers. If you're a producer for GT Interactive or EA or Eidos, say, and you green-light another *COMMAND & CONQUER* clone, and it doesn't sell, well, nobody can really say you failed. A lot of *COMMAND & CONQUER* clones get published. Some of them sell really well. Yours just didn't hit the nerve. You're not likely to get fired. If you green-light something truly offbeat and it fails, you must be a fool. What could you have been thinking? Your job is on the line. It's the old Hollywood cover-your-ass syndrome, and it's endemic in our field. Going with the flow, making the safe bet is easier.

Well, I'm not in a position to fund game development, so I can't do anything about the publishers' failure of imagination. But it occurs to me that computer game designers are at least partly at fault, too. Maybe it's true that the publishers are reluctant to fund novel notions; but I suspect that they aren't pitched many really creative concepts either.

Why not? Partly because of self-censorship by developers, who are unlikely to invest in a prototype if they know it won't get funded, and off-beat titles don't, often. But I suspect it's partly because most game developers just aren't aware of that entire universe of weird and wacky gaming styles I spoke about. Their own imaginations are constrained.

Tom Disch, a brilliant science fiction writer who has since gone on to a brilliant mainstream career, has a term for science fiction writers who have little understanding of any literature other than SF. He calls them "science fictionoids," and says that their lack of knowledge limits them to a handful of literary techniques, blinds them to the importance of character, and constrains their imagination. He insists that a writer who wishes to master his craft must read widely, in work from all eras, in and out of genre.

I think an analogous situation exists among computer game developers. If your sole experience of games derives from the arcade, the console, and the home PC – particularly if your sole experience derives from games published within the last five years – your imagination will be constrained. You will see only what exists in the here and now, and you will naturally be inclined to ring the changes on the apparently possible, rather than exploring more interesting alternatives. Your palette of techniques, your grasp of the possible, will be limited. You will be, if you will pardon the term, a "vidiot," a person whose sole understanding of games derives from video games.

If, on the other hand, you explore that weird and mutable thing we call "the game" in all its manifestations, you will see that the universe is large, that the range of

technique is enormous, that this truly is a medium of great plasticity. You will have a bigger grab-bag of ideas to draw on, a wider range of ideas to steal, a broader set of shoulders on which to stand.

That is my purpose in being here today: to explore the panoply of gaming styles that exist outside the three electronic game industries, outside arcade and console and PC. To demonstrate, in short, the importance of not being a vidiot, of studying non-electronic games.

Non-electronic games have been around far longer than electronic ones; and far more gaming styles have been explored in non-electronic media, if for no other reason than the fact that you can develop a non-electronic game on a budget of a few bucks for paper and cardboard and ink. The risk entailed in non-electronic game development is far more limited, and this has bred far greater creativity.

Children learn through play; so we may assume that games, which are merely formalized play, have existed since the evolution of language made it possible for people to negotiate and agree upon rules. Ball games seem universal; and dice of various forms extend back four thousand years. Indeed, the dodecahedral dice that roleplaying games have recently made popular are quite ancient; there's a very nice set, Roman in antiquity, in the British Museum.

The earliest stories, from Gilgamesh to Beowulf, were of an oral tradition; it was not until the Greeks that consciously-crafted works, attributable to individual authors, arose; not until then that plays and stories were thought of as art, their creators as artists.

Similarly, our earliest games are the product of a folk tradition: CHESS and GO and O-WAR-EE.

The first game attributable to an individual designer of which I'm aware was THE KING'S GAME, designed by Helwig, Master of Pages for the Duke of Brunswick in 1780. THE KING'S GAME was a Chess variant; but its board contained 1666 squares, containing different types of terrain, and the units represented infantry, cavalry, and artillery.

In 1824, Lieutenant von Reisswitz of the Prussian army devised a game using realistic military maps at a scale of 1:8000; he demonstrated it for the Chief of Staff of the Prussian army, who exclaimed, "It's not a game at all; it's a training for war!" And he ordered a copy for each regiment of the army. The game and variants of it continued to be played in the Prussian and German armed forces for decades thereafter.

The first true *kriegspiel* – a military training featuring a gamemaster or referee to adjudicate disputes – was designed in 1876 by Colonel von Verdy du Vernois of the German army. Players were permitted to do whatever they wished, as long as the gamemaster ruled it feasible. In a sense, these less rigid *Kriegspieler* were forerunners of the modern roleplaying game.

*Kriegspieler* were widely used in training across Europe by the end of the 19th century; and their derivatives, complex combat simulations, both manual and computer-moderated, are widely used in the armed forces of all developed nations today.

The late 19th century also saw the first commercially-published board and card games – initially for use with folk games like CHESS, CHECKERS, and WHIST. But game manufacturers began to promote less-known folk

titles like PACHEESI, too, and produced the first copyrighted original designs. George Parker founded Parker Brothers in 1883, and published his first design, BANKING, in that year. Milton Bradley founded his eponymous company in 1860 as a publisher of lithographs, and began publishing puzzles and boardgames in 1880.

In other words, guys, history didn't begin with PONG.

In the early part of the century, commercial games became more widespread. Parker Brother's first real hits were ROOK and PIT, both published in 1903.

Charles Darrow's MONOPOLY – a game essentially pirated from Lizzie Magie's THE LANDLORD'S GAME – became an enormous success after its publication in 1936, making Darrow the first freelance game designer to become a millionaire, and incidentally saving Parker from probable bankruptcy. It's worth remembering that games are cheap entertainment; you can play them again and again once you've bought the set. And during the Depression, money was scarce for most people.

After World War II, with the growth of the American economy, boardgaming grew as well, with most of the classic commercial boardgames published in the 50s and 60 – CANDYLAND in 49, THE GAME OF LIFE in 60 (although earlier games under the same title had been published as far back as the 19th century). Many of these titles were imports – RISK was originally from Miro in France, CLUE from WADDINGTONS in Britain.

A number of freelance designers, including the revered Sid Sackson, found it possible to make a living as a game designer, albeit you'd be foolish to quit your day job. While Parker and Milton Bradley dominated the field, there were any number of smaller publishers, and the market was relatively open to new ventures – the retail channel was far less consolidated, and TV advertising not yet considered a must for a credible product launch.

From 1962 to 1976, 3M published some of the finest boardgames ever published in the English language, including Sid Sackson's ACQUIRE and BAZAAR and Alex Randolph's TWIST; eventually, though 3M wondered what the hell it was doing in the games business, and sold its line to Avalon-Hill, which of course was taken over by Hasbro this year.

Hasbro acquired Milton Bradley in 1984, and Tonka, which by then owned Parker Brothers, in 1991. It also owns Selchow & Richter, US publishers of SCRABBLE and TRIVIAL PURSUIT, and basically now controls the entire mass market gaming industry – there are still a few smaller players, but only one, Winning Moves, that's publishing much of interest any more.

The mass market industry, such as it is, consists largely of old brand-name product that sells because everyone knows the titles; crap licensed from film and television; and kids games that are essentially brain-dead.

The most interesting titles tend to be those that are aimed at adults. Even for such games, dirt-simple rules that can be explained in five minutes or less are a virtual requirement; you just won't get the buyer from Toys R Us interested in anything else. But that has its virtues; when the rules-set has to be that tight, you tend to get refined, tight, classy little games. And that, incidentally, it exactly what you want for an online-only, ad-supported game; you want something people can grok in a few sentences of explanation and plunge right into. People who want to develop this style of game have to realize that HEARTS

and SPADES only gets you so far; everyone offers that, it's a commodity. To attract users, you're going to need proprietary games that others can't offer. If I were doing this, I'd sure look into licensing 25 WORDS OR LESS or CHRONOLOGY.

There's still a great deal of creativity in modern mass-market boardgaming, but it's not coming out of the U.S. Hasbro is fat and happy and basically doesn't give a fuck about innovation. The most exciting modern product is being designed and published in Germany, which has a far more competitive market and a far bigger market on a per-capita basis – that is, Germans buy a lot more boardgames each, although there are fewer of them. And the aesthetic is far better developed there; in the U.S., there's only Games magazine, but in Germany, there are a great many publications that cover boardgames – newspapers and magazines often run boardgame reviews. And a great many publishers, and designers whose names command respect and generate sales – designers like Klaus Teuber (SETTLERS OF CATAN), Rudolf Knizia (MODERN ART, EUPHRATE & TIGRIS) and Alan Moon (ELFENLAND). Moon is an interesting illustration, actually, since he's an American, but has to go to Germany to get published. Another indication of the superior aesthetic of the German market is that Sid Sackson is basically out of print in the US, except for ACQUIRE from Avalon Hill, while many of his titles are available in Deutschland.

The aesthetic of the German boardgame is particularly interesting; these titles tend to be somewhat more complex than the US mass-market norm, but not a lot so. I don't have any problems playing them with my 9 year-old, for instance. Most are multiplayer. They tend to be tightly constrained in time, taking no more than two hours to play. They're turn-based, but taking your turn takes only a few minutes, so they zip along, and often there are actions others can take to affect you during your turn, so they're not sitting around waiting. Typically, you have a range of resources to manipulate – cards in your hands, or tokens, or something of the kind; and it isn't always obvious, in any particular circumstance, exactly what you should do with them. You're faced with a small set of decisions on a turn, but those decisions are difficult ones to make.

Contrast that with CANDYLAND, say, where there are no decisions to make. Or most other US boardgames, where the decisions are meaningless or trivial.

Again, this is a great basic model for online games. Relatively short playtimes, turn-based to minimize latency issues, short turn times, thoughtful decisions.

A number of these games, including MODERN ART and SETTLERS OF CATAN, have been republished in the states by Mayfair Games – which was bought last year by ICE – but you can probably find copies. Rio Grande Games also republishes some German games here. Others need to be ordered from overseas; English translations of many foreign boardgame rules can be found at [www.gamecabinet.com](http://www.gamecabinet.com).

To say that boardgaming is dead in the States is, luckily, untrue. On the mass-market level, it is dead, or at least brain-dead, but boardgaming has found a modest home in hobby gaming. Unit sales tend to be pretty dismal,

especially with the collapse in the distribution channel over the last year, but this doesn't necessarily stop people who love what they're doing from publishing this way. Particularly interesting is Cheapass Games, who produce titles like KILL DR. LUCKY, essentially a reversal of CLUE, and BEFORE I KILL YOU MR. BOND, in which you capture spies and then taunt them, doubling the point value of the spy each time you taunt. The kicker is that if someone has the same taunt card in his hand, he can play it to let the spy escape and blow up your lair.

Cheapass isn't the only company with games of this style; take a look at Chaosium's CREDO, in which you play various bits of doctrine and try to get them established as official church doctrine, possibly ending up with a Catholic church where the Albigensian heresy is revealed truth. Or Greg Porter's BLACK DEATH, where you as a disease compete to rack up the largest body count against the other plagues. Or GUILLOTINE, from Wizards of the Coast, in which the players are rival executioners competing to kill the most prestigious "clients." Like German boardgames, these have simple rules-sets, although more complex than those of mass-market games; they tend not to be as strategically sophisticated or refined, but have a humorous edge that makes for fun play.

In addition to this style of boardgame are what you might call the Diplomatic game. The granddaddy of diplomatic games is, of course, Allan Calhammer's DIPLOMACY, first published in 1958. In DIPLOMACY, you take the part of one of seven European great powers. Moves are written, and then revealed and resolved simultaneously, so you never know what the other players are doing as you write your moves. The key to the game is the support order, which allows your units to support moves by other players. It is a fairly elegant game strategically, but the real innovation is that it depends utterly on negotiation and diplomacy. The powers are roughly equal in strength; the only way to overrun an opponent is to find allies. But because you can't be sure what the other players are doing, you can never entirely trust your allies. Backstabs are endemic. Games often end in tears. It is a vicious, wonderful, involving game.

As a class, Diplomatic games require negotiation among the players. This is by contrast to most so-called multiplayer games; in MONOPOLY, for instance, there's very little you can do to help or hinder your opponents, so diplomacy is not a factor. Avalon Hill was the premier publisher of diplomatic games, including my own PAX BRITANNICA and the American edition of KINGMAKER, but other publishers produce some as well.

These games, too, are important for online developers to study; they promote communication and debate among the players, and communication is what online is all about.

The hobby channel is far more receptive to new product, and product from garage operations, than any other game industry, and you therefore see all sorts of weird stuff published here, some of it quite interesting.

**This article will be continued in the next issue of the *Wargamer!***

# Shield Bearer (NPC) for AD&D

*The work experience intern for intelligent adventurers.*

By Edward Pan

- Basic requirements:** STR 14, CON 12, DEX 12.
- Weapons:** Halberd/spear/pike and dagger.
- Armour:** Studded leather
- Background and attitude:**
- Young and strong men or women who like the idea of becoming a warrior and want more in life than being “men-at-arms”, but at the same time (especially due to limited training) want to see the world and learn the fighting crafts before deciding their future.
  - Restless people who are not content with village life and want to learn on the job whilst being paid.
- Skill level:** These are the sort of people who later join the army or become a mercenary and thus to start them off, they should have a basic skill level between 0<sup>th</sup> level guards and 1<sup>st</sup> level warrior with 1 or 2 weapon and non-weapon proficiencies missing (ie only slightly less than 1<sup>st</sup> level PCs).
- Role in party:** Similar to that described in the Fighters’ Handbook (Spear-Carrier), the main role is “a pair of hands” in combat situations.
- Shield Bearers
- are expected to provide cover from missile fire for bow/crossbow users by using a body shield.
  - are expected to attend and drag to safety those PCs who are seriously wounded.
  - carry light sources in dungeons.
  - keep a constant lookout for ambushes and unexpected visits.
  - occasionally stay behind to guard pack animals (if safe).
  - carry extra weapons/equipment for PCs who are overburdened.
  - stand behind a PC and help attack foes with polearms whilst not being engaged in direct melee combat (safety for shieldbearer).
  - only in extreme situations, the NPC is expected to help the survival of the party by engaging in melee.
- Payment:** Because of the higher degree of danger (well maybe, as many people once recruited to the military quickly get slaughtered in battle) and the higher level of “excitement”, offset by the relatively safe role in the party and inexperience, Party pays 5 gp for the first month (as well as providing training and equipment) then 10 gp per month thereafter.

Did you enjoy this magazine? Would you like to see your *own* name in print? Do you have something to contribute to the gaming community at large?

If you answered **yes** to all of those questions, why not submit to the *Queensland Wargamer*?? If you didn't answer yes, we'd be happy to hear your feedback.

## Text submissions

If you have an email account, please send text submissions via email as a Rich Text Format (RTF) attachment (first preference), in any major word processor format, or plain ASCII text if formatting is not necessary. If this is not available, send text submissions on a 3½" IBM-compatible floppy disk as per the formats above. Disks will be returned at our expense. Otherwise, send typed or *legible* hand-written manuscripts, preferably double-spaced.

## Artwork

Art is cool! Art fills up lots of space, looks pretty, and most importantly, fills up lots of space!! If you've got something even-remotely game related... Artwork is preferred as a quality scan at a *minimum* of 300 dpi in GIF, JPEG, PNG, or (shudder) MS-Windows bitmap format (if sending as a bitmap, please send as a zip file!). Send on disk or via email. Art will also be accepted as good quality photocopies, but give us *at least* a week before the publication deadline so that we can get it scanned. **NO ORIGINALS!** Black and white inked works please – no pencils. Up to A4 size is preferred with at least 15mm border on all sides.

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## A final note

I anticipate that the next issue of the *Queensland Wargamer* will be put together in time for Orientation Week 2000...assuming the Y2K bug does not disrupt things too much <grin>. As such, the deadline for issue 51 is **30 November 1999**.

**Send submissions to:** Editor  
Games Society  
C/- Clubs & Societies  
Student Union  
University of Queensland  
St Lucia QLD 4067

**Email Nicholas Frampton:** [Whyrl@feathers.net](mailto:Whyrl@feathers.net)

**QUGS website:** <http://members.tripod.com/~QUGS/>

