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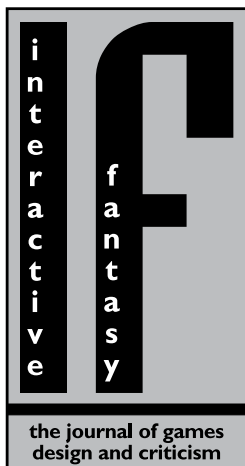
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interactive fantasy issue 2

*If you can dream – and not make dreams your master
If you can think – and not make thoughts your aim*
Rudyard Kipling

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Editorial

Education is an admirable thing. But it is well to remember from time to time that nothing that is worth knowing can be taught.

Oscar Wilde

Ivan Illich (the author of *Deschooling Society*) wrote that the saddest thing he had ever seen was a small child lining her collection of dolls and teddy bears up into neat rows in order to ‘play schools’ with them. It is easy enough to see what saddened him. The over-regulated world of formalized education was the only one that the child could imagine; even her play-world was one that re-enacted the rituals of her school.

If, as we argued last issue, children’s play is about exploration, about discovering what their bodies and minds are capable of, and about experimenting with roles that they may one day take on in ‘real life’, then no antithesis between ‘play’ and ‘education’ ought to exist. They are, in the final analysis, the same thing.

That children learn through playing is no great discovery. We see it in the counting and spelling games of *Sesame Street*. We see it in an extreme form in the Steiner schools, where children under seven are actively discouraged from doing anything other than playing. And of course, the English have traditionally regarded ‘games’ as the cornerstone of their educational system. The Victorian poet Henry Newbolt (‘Play up! Play up! And play the game!’) saw an absolute continuity between school sports and the Crimea, as if war were a form of cricket or cricket a form of war; Wellington, famously, thought that Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton. It would be easier to laugh at this if the present Prime Minister had not received roars of applause from his party conference when he announced that games—meaning, of course, competitive sports—were fun and were therefore to be made compulsory for all schoolchildren. Am I alone in thinking that compulsory play, let alone compulsory fun, is a contradiction in terms?

It is not likely that any Tory party conference in the near future will be baying for the compulsory teaching of *Dungeons & Dragons*; nor have I ever heard it argued that role-playing builds character or is a cornerstone of the British way of life. Nevertheless, I am very pleased to be able to dedicate this issue’s ‘Analysis’ section to discussion of the very positive educational uses that role-playing games are being put to by a minority of schoolteachers. Gaming, as Greg Costikyan argues elsewhere this

Editorial

issue, is a democratic form of entertainment, placing the audience and the creator on a more or less equal footing. I had feared that ‘classroom’ role-playing might overturn this principle; but not a bit of it. Each of the four essays shows, in different ways, how role-playing games can become a means by which pupils can participate in and direct their own education more fully. This seems to me to represent both ‘play’ and ‘education’ in their truest forms: we explore; we experience; we learn; we develop. Those of us educated in more autocratic systems and who spent much of our childhood being told to put those silly games away and do something useful instead can only look on with envy and admiration.

Children play in order to grow up. Grown-ups, on the other hand, very often play because it gives them a licence to behave childishly. While this is not in itself a bad thing, an adult hobby that is substantially motivated by a nostalgia for an imperfectly remembered childhood seems, if nothing else, rather sterile. So while we may recognize the child-like impulses that make us want to play we also, very properly, seek to make our hobby more mature.

For this reason I was pleased to receive a press release from White Wolf Game Studio (publisher of *Vampire*, *Werewolf*, *Mage* and the excellent *Wraith*) announcing the creation of the Black Dog Gaming Factory, a new imprint dedicated to ‘producing artistic role-playing games and supplements for an older, more mature reader’. The press release says, correctly, that ‘role-playing games are not just for kids’ and that Black Dog intends to ‘artistically pursue themes and issues that gaming has never been allowed to address’. Andrew Greenberg, the supervisor of the Vampire line, says that he wants to transform gaming ‘from an embarrassing hobby to something approaching art’.

Its attitude to the rest of the gaming industry may be a touch patronizing—I certainly don’t regard *Pendragon* and *Amber* as immature embarrassments, let alone ‘spastic cousins you’re afraid to let at the Thanksgiving table’ but nevertheless, the aims that Black Dog espouses are very close to those which Interactive Fantasy was set up to propagate, so I was fascinated to see what this new, mature, artistic line was to consist of.

The first mature and artistic release for *Werewolf* is to be entitled *Freak Legion*. This game is said to:

deal in an explicit way with ... those mortals who have been possessed by bane spirits and turned into something evil and gross. This is a book about violation and damnation. It is about those who not only sell their souls for power, but their bodies, also.

The first supplement for *Wraith* is entitled *Dark Reflections*. Like *Freak Legion*, it deals with ‘mature themes’:

These may include profanity, sexual situations, scenes of extreme violence, and material which is just plain disturbing.

Just what is going on here? White Wolf may be right in their belief that children under ten are likely to be harmed by images of the un-

clothed human body, the sexual act, vernacular English and fictitious violence; I remain resolutely agnostic on this question. But does the presence of such things automatically make a product ‘mature’ and ‘adult’? Might not a company that looked for themes other than violence have a better claim to be ‘adult’ than one which simply makes it more explicit? Do we regard Clive Barker as a more mature writer than Virginia Woolf because he depicts more sex, violence and bad language?

Even on its own terms, it is hard to see the purpose of White Wolf’s new imprint. Is it really likely that there are parents who would regard *Wrath* or *Vampire* as suitable reading for their eight year old, but would not wish them to see *Dark Reflections*? If not, then for whose benefit are these Black Dog games being created?

Even granted that White Wolf’s sudden concern for the moral well-being of the younger generation is sincere, is it not somewhat hypocritical to pretend that these new, more gory, more sexually explicit games—games that they themselves describe as ‘splatterpunk’—are adult and mature, and that they are being created in order to turn role-playing games into a serious art-form?

Some of the *Werewolf* supplements depict an imaginary company called Black Dog Games Factory. The fictitious Black Dog is run by minions of the Wyrms with the objective of corrupting young people by inuring them to violence. This is a small and reasonably funny joke at the expense of the games industry. I wish I could say the same thing for the real Black Dog press release.

In this issue’s education section, Nathan Gribble tells us how role-playing has helped, in a small way, with the problems of bullying and ‘age-ism’. David Millians describes a game in which a potentially dull history lesson was made exciting and became the catalyst for a lot of spontaneous creativity—as well as immersing its players in an imaginary world in ways that most adult gaming groups can only dream of. Andrew Malcolm tells us how role-playing helped him cope with a disability, and Nicole Frien shows us how whole communities can come together to learn about and participate in their country’s history. Against this is set the world of Black Dog Games Factory:

This is not just a book about gross gore (although gooey stuff will be shown throughout the book) ...
We leave it to the reader to decide which approach to role-playing is more mature.

An Interruption from the Publisher

Excuse me for butting in, but there are a couple of things I need to say.

A year ago, two freelance game designers linked by a common vision and a couple of expensive fax-modems plotted the birth of a new kind of role-playing magazine, to be called '*Inter*action*'. Twelve months and a sold-out first issue later, we've come a long way and learned a lot. Mostly about trademark law.

We have been informed that the word '*Interaction*' is a registered trademark held by the American software company Sierra On-Line in the context of a periodical journal concerning educational and entertainment software, and that our use of the word in the context of our magazine '*Inter*action*' is an infringement of that trademark. As a result, we have changed the name of the magazine to '*Interactive Fantasy*'.

We wish to apologize unreservedly to Sierra On-Line and their lawyers for our inadvertent misuse of their trademark. We were not aware of the existence of their trademark or magazine at the time we named ours, and it was not our intention to cause confusion between the two products. We are deeply sorry and we won't do it again, ever, ever, ever.

Secondly, when we founded the magazine-formerly-known-as-*Inter*action*, we did so not as a money-making venture but because we thought such a magazine ought to exist. It was a part-time project done mostly for fun. But times and circumstances change, major games companies headhunt freelancers away from smaller publishers and then decide that they're not going to publish their work after all, and we have to eat. A new company, Hogshead Publishing Ltd, has been set up by the magazine's founders to publish it and other game and game-related material; mostly projects we can't talk about at the moment.

I want to assure readers and subscribers that *Interactive Fantasy* will not become a house magazine for Hogshead Publishing Ltd. Although it will contain advertisements for Hogshead products, it will not be pre-viewing or reviewing our game designs in these pages. Other writers may describe Hogshead products in their articles but, in the same way that we're not afraid to be rude about products advertised in *IF*, they won't have to be flattering about them. *IF* will remain an independent voice.

You and I are well aware that other magazines have made similar claims in the past, and have proceeded to stampede over them in the rush towards commercial viability and self-congratulation. We're not going to do that. However, if you have subscribed to the magazine and you feel at any time that it is becoming a little too self-serving and smug for your tastes, write to us and we will refund the remainder of your subscription, with no quibbles or qualms. (Failing that, write to us anyway and tell us how we're doing. There is no letters page in this issue for two basic reasons: lack of space, and lack of letters.)

With *IF*, we have set ourselves an agenda of championing games which take the concept of 'role-play' in new, unexplored directions; to advance the state of the art. Hogshead Publishing, being a commercial company trying to survive in a very competitive industry, may not always be able to follow that agenda. However, if we publish a game it should be taken as a sign that we believe in it, and we're producing it for reasons which are not purely financial. If you ever doubt that, just tell yourself that the product which offends you is being published in a cynical money-making move to raise enough funds to let us produce other, more interesting, more innovative, more artistic, less commercial games. It won't be true, but it may make you feel better.

Thank you for your attention. Rest assured, the rest of the magazine is more interesting than this bit was.

James Wallis
Director of Hogshead Publishing



GAMES AND PUZZLES

Five-Minute Game

You need five black and white counters set up as shown:



Rules

- 1 The first person to form a line of four pieces of his own colour wins the game.
- 2 Three adjacent counters must be moved at each turn, with the following conditions:
 - a) end pieces may not be moved as part of a group.
 - b) at least one piece in the group must be your own colour.
 - c) the group of three counters being moved must be transferred—without changing the order in any way—to either end, and the subsequent gap closed up by pushing the two separate groups together.

This game appeared in *Games & Puzzles*, available from all good newsagents and game shops at £1.95 or subscribe on the form below.

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OVERVIEWS

There are many forms of interactive fiction and role-playing; the activities can be conducted through many different media and put to many different uses—fun, educational and therapeutic.

In this section, the various fields of interactive narrative are introduced and analysed by experts and leading authorities.

GAMA: Gaming & Education Group

by David Millians

GAMA, the Game Manufacturer's Association, is an umbrella group for the entire game-publishing industry and seeks to further gaming in a variety of ways. It is primarily a business group, but its interests are wide-spread. The gaming industry is especially interested in receiving positive coverage to balance the often negative image it still sometimes suffers in the media. Game publishers are also naturally interested in any opportunity to expand their market.

I have known for years that many types of games can be used powerfully in schools. I have used games in my own classrooms, and other teachers have always been delighted to learn of the techniques and also the resources available from publishers of entertainment games. I finally grew frustrated that there was no discussion of this subject at games conventions, so I volunteered to start them.

Today I have enough experience from working in my own classroom and from talking with other teachers that I can reasonably conduct a workshop, sharing a host of ideas and experiences with all comers. But originally I simply wanted to gather with like-minded thinkers, tell them my ideas and learn from theirs. This is how I still like to conduct these seminars. Formal plagiarism may be a crime, but in teaching there is often nothing more valuable than a colleague's good idea. While everyone has the right to profit from a final, well crafted product, it has often been the more informal ideas exchanged during these discussions that have been the most important for me as a teacher.

The occasional writer, illustrator or publisher did join the teachers, students, parents, psychologists, trainers, social workers, prison workers and others who regularly met at conventions and elsewhere to examine these possibilities. Two years ago, GAMA approached me formally to organize the exploration of these ideas. They had the support, logistical and monetary, for programmes generated during these conversations in the back rooms of convention halls.

A mailing list began to develop and we now publish a simple newsletter four times a year as a forum for the continuing discussion of gam-

ing and education. It is free and available to anyone who is interested. We publish articles including updates, descriptions by teachers of the use of games in their own classrooms, reviews of games, news of recent publications and information about discounts available for teachers. This newsletter is also posted to several Internet USENET newsgroups, including rec.games.abstract, rec.games.board, rec.games.frp.advocacy, rec.games.frp.miniatures and rec.games.frp.misc.

We continue to lead seminars on gaming, education and young people at national game conventions and we are working with GAMA in an effort to bring games into classrooms and make them more accessible to teachers. We correspond with teachers around the world who teach students from six years old and upwards. They use a variety of published and original materials: some favour wargames and simulations, while others prefer free-form story-telling. They report great success with these approaches.

We are developing materials to share with teachers who are not themselves gamers and an annotated bibliography of games to help interested teachers find games appropriate for their topic, students, schedule and budget. We are seeking input for these projects from anyone interested in these issues and ideas.

We are interested in learning about formal studies of games and we hope to encourage further study and publication in an effort to promote games as an educational technique and as a hobby. Anyone engaged in such work or aware of such projects in the past is encouraged to contact us.

Teachers have used games for millenniums, but we usually call them simulations. Transforming an entertaining game into an effective piece of education often involves only a few changes in vocabulary. Many excellent teachers are excited about the opportunities offered by games. As teachers experiment and ideas spread, games may have a wonderful effect on students' experiences in school. We all benefit.

If you want to learn more about the GAMA Gaming & Education Group, want to receive the newsletter, or have other ideas, please contact: David Millians, Paideia School, 1509 Ponce de Leon Avenue, Atlanta, GA 30307, USA (email: dragon@netcom.com)

Play-by-Mail Games

From Boardgames to Freeforms

By Wayne

Play-by-Mail (PBM) games existed long before anyone had thought of the term ‘interactive fiction’. The first documented evidence of games being played by post was a game of chess between two Chinese generals many centuries ago.

Chess was the ideal game to be run on a postal basis, as it had a strict set of rules which were easily understood by both players. Furthermore, the players’ instructions could be written down in an easily understandable format and then sent through the post. Over the centuries, PBM has continued to develop in this way, by taking rules from existing board games and adapting them for postal play. *Scrabble*, *Monopoly*, *Risk*, draughts, *Cluedo* (called *Clue* in the USA) and even noughts and crosses have all been successfully turned into postal games.

When the first role-playing games were released, postal games changed. Once again, the hobby adapted the rules and ideas behind role-playing and created a postal variant. I credit Kevin Cropper with creating the first postal RPG, since around 1980 when he turned his long-running RPG campaign, *Crasimoff’s World*, into a postal game. He advertised it in *White Dwarf* and was inundated with replies and applications to join. Eventually he had to give up his full-time job in order to write hand-moderated role-playing turns for a living.

The way his game worked was simple. Using his rules—which cost around £2.50 each—a player created a party of ten fictional individuals, who were either priests, fighters or mages. Once a party had been created, the player returned information about it to Kevin, who placed it somewhere in his fantasy world. He sent the players a written description detailing their starting location, news, recent local events and a page full of rumours. The players had to write down the equivalent of what they would have said to Kevin if he had been the referee of an over-the-table RPG session, and return it to him through the post.

Kevin, using a combination of his refereeing and literary skills, would write a response to the player’s actions and return it via the post, charging the player £1.00 for this service. The player would read the turn and write another reply, which would be returned to Kevin, and the circle would continue.

If one player's party met another player's party, Kevin would give each player the other's address and they could communicate with each other outside the game to swap information, news and other pieces of useful information. Hundreds of people joined *Crasimoff's World* and enjoyed the atmosphere of the campaign world—the game is still being run to this very day, albeit by different referees from another company.

After *Crasimoff's World* came a glut of sword-and-sorcery-based PBMs which allowed the players to run individual characters in fantasy worlds, including *Saturnalia*, a classic among PBM games. However, as the RPG hobby developed and changed, so did the PBM world. As RPGs such as *Call of Cthulhu*, *Twilight 2000* and *Marvel Super Heroes* went on sale, so did their postal equivalents, and over the last ten years the RPG world and PBM scene have coexisted.

Now, as the RPG side of the hobby is tending to lean towards interactive fiction with games such as *Amber*, the PBM hobby has once again followed suit. Several PBM companies are running games with no statistics for characters whatsoever, leaving the players to design their own characters simply by describing them. Games such as *New Earth*—which is set in the south-west regions of the UK in the future, where everything has returned to the technology of the sixteenth century and the puritanical battle between God and the Devil is fought out by the players' characters—cater for statistic-free postal gaming. Games like *The Wing*—a 'hard' SF game, set on a Spiral Arm in the far future, where humans are not the superior race, and caste and status are of supreme importance—are also virtually stat-free and yet provide an excellent postal role-playing service.

Not everyone would accept that role-playing by post is true role-playing. The purists of the RPG world have looked down upon the PBM hobby in the past. These purists argue that the most important part of a role-playing game is the face-to-face interaction between the players. Since this can't be done via PBM games their critics do not accept that they are 'interactive'.

This is true—to a certain extent. PBM games aren't immediately interactive, but they are not designed to be. Most PBM players would, I suspect, say that they would prefer to play an over-the-table game of interactive fiction than play a PBM game. But when they can't enjoy interactive games with their immediate friends, they do so with their postal friends.

People who play PBM realize that getting a group of people together at a certain location at a certain time requires a great deal of effort and organization. However, postal games can be played almost anywhere, at any time, and by anyone who has a decent postal service. Although PBM does not allow immediate interaction, it does provide a lot of other benefits which are not always obvious.

Overviews

For example, PBM allows the players time to think about their current predicament and to savour the experience of working out a unique, interesting and challenging response that will inspire the referee. Although ‘thinking on your feet’ is an integral part of tabletop interactive gaming, it is nice to have a change and try some well worked-out lateral thinking.

PBM players are offered wider options than over-the-table gamers. For example, in PBM a player can play a group of characters who adventure together. This means that players can develop a style of multi-character role-playing, developing the interaction between their own characters. They also get to plan, scheme and plot themes and ideas with a wide range of characters rather than just one. This gives the players more control over their characters’ actions and a sense of greater involvement.

As for interaction between players, if you have played PBM then you will realize how much money you have invested in both the Post Office and British Telecom—communicating by letter and by telephone is a integral part of the PBM hobby.

PBMers also interact on a regular basis by email or fax and also meet up at pub-meets and conventions. Indeed, unlike a traditional interactive fiction game, PBM games are played all the time and don’t end after one gaming session. Roles are played continually through these letters, phone calls and meetings—there is no waiting for a next gaming session for PBMers!

All in all PBMers realize that face-to-face interactive gaming is a luxury. They enjoy it when they can, but in the meantime they play PBM games as an acceptable and enjoyable alternative. Indeed, PBM games are not designed to replace games based on interactive fiction, they are designed to complement them, and they fill the gap between face-to-face gaming sessions admirably.

Wayne is former editor of the magazines GM and GMI, and was a founder of the British PBM Association.

Multi-User Dungeons

by Alan Cox, with contributions from Malcolm Campbell

A Multi-User Dungeon (MUD) is a computer program which accepts connections from a number of simultaneous users over a computer network and provides them with access to a shared 'adventure game'; that is, a shared textual virtual environment where players can move between rooms, interact with each other and manipulate virtual objects; all of which is described in text.

While there are many multi-user computer games, this article restricts itself to covering those with at least a minimal role-playing content. For this reason it ignores games like *Doom*¹. Although *Doom* is closer than text-based MUDs to what the immersive virtual reality of the future may be like, the role-playing aspect is very limited when you are a super space marine who is controlled via 'fire', 'switch weapon' and 'operate' buttons.

Unlike the recently popularized network combat games, the role-playing MUDs are surprisingly varied and sometimes extremely sophisticated. While common themes and ideas frequently recur, in much the same way as they do in tabletop role-playing, the games vary enormously from one another.

What are MUDs?

The textual reality portrayed by MUDs is perhaps closest in format to the interactive fiction text games popularized by companies like Infocom. Players are given textual and in some games simple graphical, descriptions of their environment. They are given the ability to interact with the environment. The environment varies as widely as the setting of tabletop role-playing games does. Gameplay can vary from exploring educational exhibits to the infamous Genocide game where the players are placed in a fantasy environment, given weapons—and the last alive wins.

The history of multi-user dungeons

The history of role-playing via computer goes back a surprisingly long way. In 1970 Crowther and Woods wrote *Adventure*², which is held to be the first text-based computer adventure game. There was very little role-playing, the command set was basic and the goal fixed. Nevertheless, this was the starting point for computerized fantasy role-playing.

Overviews

The earliest computer-based games that could be said to have a real role-playing element were not computer-moderated. From quite early in the history of interactive multi-user computing, systems supported ‘conferences’ where people could talk together. Each message scrolled up the display, tagged with the sender’s name. While intended for serious long-distance discussions, they rapidly acquired recreational uses too, and people began playing *Dungeons & Dragons*³ over them. Even today, the playing of traditional RPGs over computers on the internet is quite common.

While not the first such game, *MUD1*⁴ which ran at Essex University was probably the greatest initial influence on the development of MUDs, including giving the genre its name. In 1979 Roy Trubshaw, then a student at Essex University, wrote the basics of the initial game, unaware that any other such games even existed.

Richard Bartle took over the game and turned it from a simple interactive environment into a masterpiece of interactive fiction, with beautifully written prose and consistent, logical game design. Now over ten years old, the game, in its various expanded forms, is run commercially around the world.

The Essex MUD was played from numerous sites other than Essex as the ARPANET and the UK academic computer network took shape. Essex acquired several other games based on the same system—including a multi-user *Fraggle Rock*. Its impact on the rest of the world was, however, muted by the fact it wasn’t freely available as source code.

Late in 1987 I was a student at the University College Of Wales in Aberystwyth, and along with a few other Essex MUD players got involved in a project that later became known as *AberMUD*⁵. Two unplanned events occurred that ignited the explosion of MUDs on the internet. Firstly we ported the game to a Unix system, and secondly someone asked us for a copy. We released it with a licence that allowed free non-commercial use, and half the development team then failed their exams.

AberMUD wasn’t that brilliant a game and the program design itself was poor, but it resembled *MUD1* and was freely available. It spread rapidly and soon was influencing other people to look beyond the ideas of the original MUD. It was very much a self-centred game. You could play as groups but it was not necessary—and murdering the other players was a lucrative (and highly popular) business.

Two major shifts in philosophy occurred after this time. Firstly people began to look more towards traditional role-playing ideas. This gave rise to games such as *DikuMUD*⁶ where people work together as teams of players of different character classes. The system, like that of *AD&D*⁷, is structured in such a way that group play is needed to get anywhere.

Second was the shift to pure role-playing and social interaction, without competition or advancement. Jim Aspnes’ *TinyMUD*⁸ was the first

game to embody this concept. It was a simple system that allowed numerous people to interact within a virtual environment. What made it innovative was that it allowed all the players to add to and expand the game world. It rapidly became a cult, with games groaning under hundreds of users. The original *TinyMUD* game world grew so large that nobody knew it all, and eventually so big that the computer could not run it. Tradition being what it is, they haul the original *TinyMUD* world back into existence for one day each year, as a sort of memorial to itself.

Before *TinyMUD* the games tended to be goal-driven and competitive. You got points or kicks from hacking your ‘friend’ to death with an axe. *TinyMUD* and the many games that have derived from it have moved away from this. You no longer needed to even see them as games; they are closer to being conferencing systems and have been used both as pure social environments and for more serious purposes⁹.

Perhaps the best serious example is *MicroMUSE*¹⁰. Initially this *TinyMUD*-derived game was one person’s simulation of a space station. It is now the first of several MUD systems intended for learning. What started as a game is now becoming recognized for its true flexibility.

Conventional role-playing and MUDs

There are three types of MUDs: computer-moderated games which resemble multi-player adventure games with a role-playing element; human-moderated games where a number of referees or judges moderate the rules and the MUD is used merely as a setting for play; and player-moderated games where consensual decision-making is used to guide the outcome of conflicts.

All three types have, like tabletop games, a method of character advancement. Some computer-moderated games call this ‘score’, whereas human-moderated games often prefer to follow a published game system’s mechanisms for awarding of ‘experience points’. In the consensual role-play of the player-moderated games, there may seem to be no means of advancement—but in these the advancement is often social. It is the popular players who get selected to imprint a bronze dragon in games based on Anne McCaffrey’s *Dragonriders of Pern*, for example.

The settings used in MUDs are similar to traditional games. Over 80 per cent of MUDs listed in the internet mud-list¹¹ are based on a fantasy theme. A small but increasing number accurately follow the rules of commercially published game systems (not always with permission) and games based upon the White Wolf *Storyteller* games¹² are becoming popular and prolific. Several games are based upon well known fantasy fiction, notably the aforementioned *Dragonriders of Pern* and Terry Pratchett’s *Discworld* novels.

The similarities between MUDs and tabletop role-play end all too abruptly once one gets down to the details. The computer-moderated

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role-playing MUD suffers very badly in comparison with a human referee. While the computer can cope happily with an instruction like 'kill the orc with my axe', players cannot give it detailed instructions about sneaking up on the left side of the orc with a dagger between their teeth.

Despite this limitation, computer-moderated games can work well; firstly because the players rapidly adapt to the limited set of rules and options, and secondly because the most obviously unrealistic and jarring element of tabletop gaming, the rulebook and tables, are hidden from them.

Human-moderated games do not suffer from this problem of limited options, but they do have their own difficulties. It may be difficult for players to get hold of one of the game's judges, and players may be unwilling to resolve situations without the human judges to moderate. The problems of this type of game are a little like those experienced in live-action role-play, where large numbers of players can all wander off in different directions.

The player-moderated style of gaming is perhaps closer to traditional role-playing than the others. It is unusual in that it tends to be a group-written story rather than being guided by one gamesmaster. Such games often describe themselves as a society in which to interact, rather than a game with goals. Nevertheless it is very much a role-playing environment, and few people behave the same way in both reality and the game world. In some cases the game world has acquired a complete political system and behaves more like a society, with petitions, voting and an elected body of overseers and controllers (often called 'wizards' after the highest rank in Essex MUD1). *LambdaMOO*¹³ at Xerox Parc is perhaps the classic example of this and has acquired a complete political system and, predictably, its own good-for-nothing career politicians.

Where next?

As electronic telecommunications become more affordable and more commercial vendors move in, many people anticipate a growth in the area of multi-user games and a significant increase in the quality of such games. Because most games are written by groups of students with limited time and experience the majority are of truly terrible quality, and are even less consistent than the first edition *Werewolf* manual. There are exceptions, most notably Roy Trubshaw and Richard Bartle's *Essex Multi-User Dungeon*. This has become a successful commercial product in the USA, although success in this country is still limited by the lack of very cheap phone calls. Another interesting indicator for the future is *Micro-MUSE*, the educational MUD system providing a learning environment for children. With Vice President Al Gore's vision of a data highway to every school and college, the future for educational MUDs can be nothing but bright.