

# CHAMPIONS UNIVERSE

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## DEDICATION

Although there are two authors listed on the cover of this book, the Champions Universe has developed organically over the course of three decades as the product of dozens of creative minds. So we'd like to dedicate this book to Steve Peterson, George MacDonald, Ray Greer, Bruce Harlick, Scott Bennie, Kevin Dinapoli, Scott Heine, Steve Perrin, Andrew Robinson, Dean Shomshak, Glenn Thain, Allen Thomas, Allen Varney, Mark Williams, the creative team at Cryptic Studios, and everyone else who's contributed to the creation of this rich, fascinating setting.

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# CHAMPIONS UNIVERSE

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# INTRODUCTION

It's tough to run a Champions campaign sometimes! There are lots of decisions to be made, groundwork to do, villains to prepare character sheets for, setting aspects to describe, and scenarios to plan. Not everyone who wants to GM a Champions game has the time or interest to create an entire campaign.

For GMs who don't want to do a whole lot of planning, or who are looking for bits and pieces from other games they can adapt for their own settings, *Champions Universe* presents an entire, ready-to-run campaign setting for Champions. This is what Hero Games refers to as a *setting book* or *campaign book*. It provides everything you need to run a game in Hero's "official" Champions setting — character creation guidelines, NPCs, scenario seeds, discussions of superhuman demographics, reviews of the major players on the superhuman scene, and much, much more.

Chapter One, *Giants Walk Among Us: A History Of Superhumanity*, starts the book by describing and discussing the history of superhumans from their first appearance in 1938 until the present day (2010, to be precise). It shows you how the presence of superhumans and superpowers has affected the world for the past seventy years and helped shape modern society into its current form.

Chapter Two, *Being Superhuman: Superhumanity In The Twenty-First Century*, delves briefly into the subject of how superpowers manifest in the Champions Universe and what it means to be "superhuman." These issues impact the character creation process and many other factors involved in campaign development.

Chapter Three, *Powers And Superpowers: Superhumans And Society*, discusses the impact and place of superhumans on and in the modern world. It looks at superhumans' effect on technology, government, the media, and various subcultures (such as martial arts, business, and religion).

Chapter Four, *Worlds Upon Worlds: The Champions Multiverse*, describes the geography of the setting. It discusses the role superhumans play in various parts of the globe, and describes several settings (such as Millennium City and Vibora Bay) where superhuman activity is particularly prevalent or noteworthy. But it goes beyond that to look into lost civilizations, secret lands hidden from ordinary humanity, the existence of alien life and

its contact with Earth, and even other dimensions and the potential threats they hold.

Chapter Five, *Who's Who In The Champions Universe*, tells you about the superhumans and organizations that have the most prominent role in the setting. If you want to learn what VIPER is like, what Dr. Destroyer's been up to, who the most powerful villains in the world are, or the secret role of the Trismegistus Council in protecting the world from extradimensional horrors, this is where you should look.

Chapter Six, *Gamemastering The Champions Universe*, describes various campaign standards, ground rules, and campaigning options for the setting. It also includes one of the most important parts of the book: the **GM's Vault**, which contains all the secret, GM's-eyes-only information about the Champions Universe. As much as possible, the first five chapters of the book have been written from a "player's perspective": they describe what players and their characters should know about the setting. They include some "secret" information where it's not convenient to separate it out — for example, even though not every PC should necessarily know about the existence and activities of the Trismegistus Council, enough of them should know that it's better for the campaign to include that information where players can read about it. (The GM can, of course, forbid certain players to read certain parts of the book, though the effectiveness of this tactic varies.)

However, there are other types of information players clearly should *not* know about. That's what the GM's Vault contains — information only the GM should know about. If you only intend to play in a Champions Universe campaign, *don't read the GM's Vault!* You'll learn things you shouldn't, and thus spoil your enjoyment of the game.

## ADAPTING THE CHAMPIONS UNIVERSE FOR YOUR OWN USE

Setting/campaign books are difficult for many gamers to use. They want a pre-packaged campaign (or parts of one, at least), but they find they don't like some aspect or aspects of the one a published product offers. This isn't surprising — gaming is very much a matter of personal tastes, and it's unlikely any company can publish a setting that appeals, completely without changes or adaptation, to thousands of gamers around the world. What one gamer loves, another despises.

### ABBREVIATIONS

This book uses the following abbreviations to refer to other *HERO System* books:

**6E1:** *The HERO System 6th Edition, Volume I: Character Creation*

**6E2:** *The HERO System 6th Edition, Volume II: Combat And Adventuring*

**APG:** *The HERO System Advanced Player's Guide*

**HSMA:** *HERO System Martial Arts*



## MMO INTO RPG, RPG INTO MMO

*Champions Universe* includes material based on the work done by Cryptic Studios as it creates the massively multiplayer online (MMO) roleplaying game *Champions Online*. While a lot of effort has been devoted to making sure the MMO content is accurately represented in this book in *HERO System* terms, MMOs and RPGs aren't the same type of game, so the same type of content isn't appropriate for each one. For example, a villain's lair in an MMO is deliberately simple, often with one room leading to another to guide game play. That doesn't make much sense for an RPG, where it's possible (and often very useful) to expand things beyond the scope of an MMO. Similarly, a villain or costume that works well on-screen in an MMO might not be as appropriate for a paper-and-pencil RPG (and vice-versa!).

Thus, the MMO-based information in this book, while containing the essence of the *Champions Online* presentation, may add to it, or rework it in minor ways, to make things more "realistic" and appropriate for an RPG. Characters who have one or two simple abilities in *Champions Online* may get fleshed out into more detailed characters with a greater variety of powers in this book, since an RPG character sheet isn't constrained by the same restrictions as an MMO. And of course, there may be some MMO secrets that you should only be able to learn by playing the MMO itself.

So don't be surprised if you see some slight variation between the *Champions Universe* as portrayed in this book and the *Champions Universe* of *Champions Online*. The differences are just the result of the book taking the wonderful elements Cryptic Studios has created and doing even more with them.

If you don't want to use the *Champions Universe* exactly as it's presented here, you have plenty of options. First, you can change it to suit yourself. For example, if you like the setting in general, but you hate the history of superhumans (or the relationship between supers and the government, or the unlimited sources of superpowers, or any other thing), then change it! Most parts of the setting can be changed without causing the whole thing to unravel — like many *Champions* campaigns, it's intended to be a robust and vibrant setting, one readily suited to world-shaking events and extreme changes.

Second, you can "borrow" the parts you like and discard the rest. You may want to do most of the work to create a *Champions* campaign (or maybe you've already done it), but you're willing to save yourself some effort by adopting this book's take on how the United States government interacts with superhumans, or substantial chunks of the CU history, or some specific master villains. Go right ahead and take what you want and leave the rest behind. There's no rule that says you have to use the entire book just as it is — in fact, the *HERO System* specifically tells you to only use what you like and change or get rid of the rest, and that applies to a setting even more than to a rules system. As long as you have fun with *some* part of the CU, that's what matters.



**CHAPTER  
ONE**

**GIANTS WALK  
AMONG US**  
*A HISTORY OF SUPERHUMANITY*