Designer's Notes

Universe

We are in the early development stages with our science fiction role-playing game. With the help of role-playing experts Dave McCorkhill and Ted Woods, everything is slowly coming together and we are planning a publication date in June of '81. Here is a condensed version of the working outline, to summarize all that will be included in this mammoth project.

• The rules for *Universe* will be divided into three books: the Gamesmaster's Guide, the Player's Guide and the Adventure Guide.

• **The Future.** A description of the human interstellar federation and a brief recounting of its history. Intended to put the GM and the players in the spirit of the game. Introduces the various technologies used (interstellar travel, artificial intelligence, methods of government and commerce).

• **The Gamesmaster.** A guide to the Gamesmaster's duties as an impartial referee and as a creator of the worlds in which the players interact.

• **Character Generation.** Initially, each character consists of four potential values in Physique, Coordination, Intellect and Social Standing. The player chooses fields of study for the young character, such as theoretical science, applied science, business, humanities, the mind, the body, and the military. Each character's potentials and fields of study are used to determine values for strength, endurance, dexterity, agility, intelligence, mental power, aggression, leadership, wealth, and social status.

• **Character Professions.** The player chooses from a list of about 25 career areas. Each character's chosen fields of study and his characteristics will determine which professions he may enter and excel at. About half the professions are military or security oriented.

• **Character Skills.** Each character receives skills from a list of about 100 highly specialized areas of expertise, based on his profession, fields of study, and characteristics. Skills may also be acquired and improved during a character's adventuring life.

• **Robots and Equipment.** The technology of artificial intelligence is presented with a list of various robot types that characters may purchase. Robots may be bodyguards, servants, porters, data analyzers, information banks, or just side-kicks. A comprehensive list of weapons, clothing, land vehicles, electronic aids, armor, tools, foodstuffs, and other equipment, along with prices, requirements and effects of use will be included. Certain professions provide characters with robots and equipment free of charge or at a discount.

• **Character Combat.** Resolving combat between characters, non-player characters, aliens, and creatures on the surface of a planet or within the cabins of a spaceship. Although all of a character's characteristics may come into play during combat, the accuracy and lethality of weapons technology will make equipment, intelligence, dexterity, and willpower more important than strength.

• **Space Travel.** Interstellar travel is conducted by hyperjumping, which may be aided by a psionic navigator. Standard propulsion spacecraft are used to travel within a star system. Orbital/sub-orbital travel uses standard propulsion and requires streamlined spacecraft (if the planet has an atmosphere). Many established routes allow travel from planet to planet with varying schedules and quality of service. Ships may be specially chartered to travel to a planet that is not a stop on a route.

• **Spaceships.** The attributes, design, construction, purchase, and rental of spaceships. Military, merchant, courier, and personal ship types are covered. Spaceship weaponry and armor are explained.

• **Space Combat.** A detailed system for resolving combat between all possible types of spacecraft in the game. Quick movement, lots of firepower, reaction time, and excitement will be stressed. Rules for gravity effects will be included.

• **Star System Generation.** Using the spectral class of the star, the number of planets of interest in the system, their resource potential, their habitability potential, their size, and the number of moons each planet has is generated. For each planet and moon, the surface gravity, the atmosphere, the average temperature, the hydrography, and the length of day is determined. If the planet or moon has liquid, the general layout of liquid and land masses is drawn out on a Planet Display. Each planet is composed of one to 82 environs, depending on its size. Extensive rules for assigning terrain types and human colonization levels to each environ, based on the planet's attributes and its distance from the Earth, will be included. Other features include starport quality, spaceroutes and schedules, technology levels, type of government, and special notes on the minerals, plant life, and animal life of the planet. Various methods of movement on planet surfaces are explained.

• **Encountering Creatures, Aliens and Non-player Characters.** Master lists of beings, with extensive instructions on creating encounter matrices suited to individual planets and environs. The detailed "mix and match" lists are supplemented by encounter frequency and reaction modifiers and may be used as presented, if the GM does not want to generate new matrices.

All the above material will be included in the Gamesmaster's and Player's Guides. The Adventure Guide will include one complete adventure and 20 adventure outlines, in various stages of completion. Three completely generated star systems will be included for use with the adventures provided or with scenarios of the GM's devising. Complete instructions on planning your own adventures with lots of plot twist ideas to interject into all sorts of situations, along with systems for the acquisition and expenditure of money and Experience Points, will round out the Adventure Guide.

John H. Butterfield