



BRITISH ISLES TRAVELLER SUPPORT

The British Forum for *Traveller* - the Game of the Far Future

BITS UK Limited
PO Box 4222
Sawbridgeworth
Hertfordshire
CM21 0DP (England)

Director: Andy Lilly
E-mail: bits@bits.org.uk
Web: www.bits.org.uk
Tel: +44-(0)1279-833773
Fax: +44-(0)1279-833773

Traveller is a registered trademark of FarFuture Enterprises. All rights reserved.

BITS Writers' Guidelines

INTRODUCTORY NOTES

BITS UK Limited is British Isles Traveller Support. It is a limited company, owned by Andy Lilly. It exists to support the science fiction role playing game **Traveller**. BITS has a membership scheme and Andy is assisted by a collection of volunteers who like the game, enjoy writing and find co-operative endeavour satisfying. There is also a unique scheme to reward work which furthers the aims of BITS (see ITUs, below).

Traveller is © and ® FarFuture Enterprises. BITS holds a licence to produce Traveller products in support of this game.

GURPS is © and ® Steve Jackson Games Incorporated. SJ Games holds a licence to publish Traveller products for **GURPS Traveller**, a role playing game set in the Traveller background's official alternative future. BITS has an agreement with SJ Games to produce material compatible with GURPS Traveller, but not exclusively for GURPS – all our books are intended to be sufficiently generic to be used with any Traveller rule set. BITS will not be producing any GURPS-specific books. Along with the data for other Traveller rule sets, of course, we may include GURPS character stats, etc. We like SJ Games (they're friendly, helpful people) and they distribute our products in the USA, so we have no intention of upsetting them by infringing upon either their intellectual property or hard-won product licence.

More generally, games companies have become rather protective of their intellectual property, so we do not allow plagiarism of such material in our books. We will not be writing any GURPS-only books. If anyone has a problem writing for us because they've signed something for someone else, let us know and we'll see if by asking nicely we can still use your work.

Imperial Trade Units is what BITS calls its reward scheme for writers and active supporters. ITUs are awarded to contributors (whether of time, work or both) in an unfathomably weird way. A portion of BITS profits (if any), not required for future investment, is divided between ITU holders *pro rata*. ITUs last one year and are issued quarterly to deserving individuals. Note that ITUs do not represent royalties. They reflect the success of BITS as a whole and not the sales of a specific book or other product.

Title to all work remains the property of its author. The rights to print, edit, distribute and sell the work in a specific publication (usually the newsletter or a book) are assigned to BITS for a given publication quantity (PQ). All authors understand that BITS will edit their work. In consideration of this the author receives either an agreed allocation of the next issue of Imperial Trade Units in the case of a book, or a by line, in the case of a newsletter submission. Should an author subsequently wish to sell the same work to a third party, we would not publish any further copies of that material beyond the publication quantity. Although BITS may print a product in batches of only a few hundred, the minimum PQ is 1,000 units. If less than PQ units have been printed, we would continue to print and sell units until the PQ is reached. If more than PQ units have already been printed, we expect to sell all existing stocks of the item in question, with the new publisher having first refusal.

We are all volunteers, paid only in ITUs, with real lives too. If we don't respond to you (at any time) within a reasonable period of time, then send us another response – it's not impossible your previous letter or e-mail got lost. However, don't pester us unnecessarily – it's annoying.

WHAT TO WRITE

Subject Matter: BITS publications all support the Traveller Science Fiction Role Playing Game, but should be sufficiently general to convert readily to other systems. We expect you to read and follow all the BITS Writers' Guidelines and to accept all editorial decisions we make – if you're unhappy with these concepts, don't bother contacting us.

Rules Systems: BITS products are intended to cover all Traveller rule sets, including GURPS. Try to avoid rule-specific references and game-specific terminology. *GURPS Traveller* states what technology is allowed in Traveller, so don't contradict these principles. Task systems differ between every Traveller rule set. In most cases tasks are obvious, e.g. the characters need to climb a cliff – they'll need the appropriate climbing skill; so don't waste time and space defining a task for it. If they need particular equipment, say so. If the task is particularly unusual (skills or difficulty), use the BITS generic task system described in Appendix A.

Newsletter: Contributors are free to write what they like, but patron encounters, planetary, gadget, location or life form pieces work best. The newsletter also carries short adventure notes, product reviews and accounts of conventions or LARP events – anything that Traveller followers will find useful.

Send newsletter submissions to the Newsletter Editor (see "Correspondence" below).

Books: We know what books we want to publish and seek out authors accordingly but if you want to suggest a new product to us, please do so. We don't generally want to repeat or do second volumes of subjects we have already covered – we need new ideas. To get us interested, we need a brief description and outline of the proposed book. We have a limited production capability, so unsolicited proposals may be deferred in favour of existing projects. We try to recognise good ideas, even if they don't get a book of their own but are adapted into other products. If we have to reject your idea, we'll tell you why. Don't take it personally, it may just be the wrong subject at the wrong time for BITS; your work may well find an alternative outlet (e.g. through SJ Games' *Pyramid* magazine).

Send product proposals/submissions to the Product Submissions Editor (see "How to Contact BITS" below). Once this Editor has evaluated your work, you may be allocated to a separate Product Editor.

If we like your proposal, we'll get back in touch and probably ask you to submit some more material fairly quickly to prove that you can write the appropriate quantity and quality to a given schedule. This still doesn't guarantee your work will reach publication – if you can't complete the work in time or it's not as good as we'd hoped then we'll discuss with you whether to shelve or defer the project or use some of the material in an alternative fashion.

Editing: The Newsletter Editor handles editing for the newsletter. For products, a specific editor will usually be assigned to guide you in the style and quality of your work. He's not there to re-write it for you. Final products also go through the Lilly process – this is where Andy enhances the work and focuses it to BITS' needs (i.e. massages your work into something unrecognisable which happens to fit into the required number of pages in the style he prefers).

Compensation: See the sections "Imperial Trade Units" and "Title" above. Compensation for work is not subject to negotiation unless you're Gary Gyax or Steve Jackson. If you don't deliver quality material to the agreed deadline, compensation will be reduced accordingly. If you deliver insulting, plagiarised, libellous rubbish, don't bother asking for compensation!

SUBMISSIONS

Layout: Use 10 point Times Roman or Century Schoolbook for text and sub-headings, 14 point Arial or Helvetica for main headings. NEVER use any Word "styles" other than "Normal". Don't use fancy fonts – we choose our own fonts. Use Windows Symbols font only if absolutely necessary. Don't waste time laying things out in great detail – we only need to see roughly how it should look – spend your time writing good quality material. We usually have to work from plain text anyway to adjust your work to fit our format. In a plain text submission, you can suggest key formatting using the following codes around sections of text: bold, <I>italics</I>, <BI>bold italics</BI>, <U>underlined</U>, i.e. **bold**, *italics*, **bold italics**, underlined. That doesn't mean we'll follow your coding, but it helps us see what you wish to highlight. Don't submit a file with carriage returns at the end of each line – only at the end of each paragraph.

Format: Please submit work in Microsoft Word (6.0, 95 or 97), Rich Text Format or ASCII text, either by e-mail or on 3.5" PC floppy disk. Please virus check all submissions. Pictures, maps and diagrams should be submitted as Microsoft Powerpoint, TIFF, GIF or JPEG. We will probably require the original drawing package files or hardcopy original for product-quality pictures, but don't send this until we ask for it.

Typed submissions are acceptable for newsletter articles, proposals and preliminary drafts. Larger submissions must be in electronic format. If we can't read your typing we won't spend time trying to decrypt it. Never send us an original hardcopy (typing or drawing) unless we have asked for it and you have taken a photocopy yourself – we cannot be responsible for loss of your material, whatever the circumstances. Every hardcopy page must have a header or footer with your name, the submission title, date and page number.

Length: Newsletter articles should be between 200 and 500 words long – if you have something larger, by all means send it in, but we may have to whittle it down or break it into parts. The *101* series of books by BITS are A5 size and usually have between 44 and 56 pages, giving a word count of 25,000 to 35,000 words.

Checking: We expect you to check your work (even if it's just a proposal) thoroughly for spelling, grammar and factual (e.g. rules) errors before sending it to us. If you're submitting rules or an adventure, then you should also have playtested your material – don't tell us if playtesting went badly, correct your work accordingly then tell us when the playtesting went really well! Nobody gets it right first time, so check your manuscript *several* times. Sending us errata after we've started laying out your "final" copy is a good way of annoying us.

Waiver: For us to use your material in a product, you must fill in section (a) below and include it at the start of each document that you submit (this is not required for newsletter submissions). If your submission was not specifically requested by BITS, you must also include section (b) below. We require this to protect us, so that you can't accuse us at a later date of stealing or misusing your ideas. Sad, isn't it?

(a) *"I, <insert your full name> of <insert full address including country>, certify that the following material is a submission to BITS UK Limited (hereafter "BITS") for evaluation. I certify that I am legally able to offer for sale this material which: (1) is the product of my own creative effort; (2) is not presently being considered for publication by anyone else; (3) will not be submitted or provided to any third party until BITS has confirmed lack of interest or three months have passed from the date of reception of the submission by BITS, whichever comes first.*

(b) *"I understand and agree that this material is submitted voluntarily and that this submission and the examination of this material by BITS does not establish, by implication or otherwise, any contract, commitment or relationship between myself and BITS. I understand and agree that BITS may choose to reject the material without any obligation to me whatsoever. If BITS accepts the material then I understand and agree that appropriate terms and conditions will be negotiated at that time. I understand and agree that BITS may already have in its possession or under development similar designs, manuscripts or other creative works bearing a resemblance in subject matter, mechanics, design innovations, concept, theme, etc., to my submission, and that said other works may be published in the future after my present submission has been evaluated and rejected. I hereby agree that, should such a situation occur, I shall have no claim or recourse, legal or otherwise, against BITS."*

GUIDELINES

Canon Considerations: There is a huge body of Traveller material, commonly referred to as the *Canon*. The best summary available is in the *GURPS Traveller* book. We try never to contradict the Canon (people can get surprisingly agitated over breaches of Canon!). Writers don't have to know that much about it but for our purposes there are a few common themes:

- There are always secrets to be uncovered.
- There are ancient (previous Human empires) and Ancient (a mysterious super-science capable civilisation) ruins to be explored and ransacked. Ancient sites may differ from each other in their technology and layout.
- Charted space is ruled by super-states which do not interfere in the internal politics of their member worlds unless the story requires it.
- There are a lot of really odd societies in the galaxy.
- To promote an interesting storyline there is a huge spread of technological capabilities on different worlds.
- Computers cannot (or at least until TNE *could not*) substitute effectively for living beings.
- Firearms are the most commonly used weapons.

- Nanotechnology and similar advances postulated since the late 1980s are not in general use, although they may (effectively invisibly) underlie some of the higher technologies.
- Cyberpunk-style enhancements (e.g. bionic arms, vat-grown fangs) are extremely rare, and mark the user as subhuman.
- Adventures have always cast characters as normal people in exceptional circumstances, rather than as superheroes surrounded by helpless victims.
- Nothing any character does makes any significant difference in the long term. This doesn't mean that what they do is not worthwhile and important, just that what they do cannot change Canon. For example, in CT Adventure 3 the players foil a Zhodani plot to attack Rhyllanor from a secret base; this is worthy work, but it does not change whether Rhyllanor is invaded or who wins the Fifth Frontier War.
- Traveller takes no view on the existence of Good, Evil or anything spiritual.
- Most Traveller adventures have ignored moral imperatives, even the desirability of ethics, entirely.
- Traveller assumes that there is an economic reason for everything, although it need not be obvious.

Plagiarism: Using properly attributed quotes is *not* plagiarism but trying to pass off other people's work as your own is and is unforgivable. We will not knowingly publish anything which has been plagiarised and will have nothing more to do with a plagiarist. If it is absolutely necessary to quote or paraphrase a key rule or background material, insert "<ref>" after the quote, where ref describes the source (remember to avoid DGP-specific material). This simplifies our task when judging whether the quote is appropriate.

References: BITS material should be as self-contained as possible, so avoid referring to other books, in particular to rules material – leave it to the GM to look up rules, equipment details, etc. Within a book, page references use the form "p.5" for a single page, "pp.6-9" for multiple pages. References will be automatically generated so in submissions, use "p.00 <waffle>" where waffle describes exactly the page, text, table, etc. that you wish to refer to.

CORRESPONDENCE AND SUBMISSIONS

Newsletter Editor: David Thomas (thomasdl@parliament.uk), 12 Liberty Street, London, SW9 0EE. Tel: +44-(0)171-735-8321.

Product Submissions: Andy Lilly (bits@bits.org.uk), BITS, PO Box 4222, Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire, CM21 0DP. Tel & fax: +44-(0)1279-833773.

Whatever you're sending: Always tell us your full postal address, telephone number and e-mail address. Always keep a copy of anything you send us, in case it gets lost in the post/ether. Whatever you send us must be clear and readable (bad photocopies, handwriting, etc. are not adequate). Include a self-addressed stamped envelope (SASE) with any postal submission and make sure the SASE will hold your whole submission if you want us to send it back at any point. We will not return material unless a SASE is provided.

STYLE

General: BITS publications are written in contemporary English, following British spelling and grammatical conventions. Where possible the style is non-technical. If you must use jargon then define it, either where it first occurs or in a glossary. A fast way to learn how we want things written is to read our previous products.

Authority: Write as authoritatively as possible. You are describing things and people you know well; you did make them up yourself, after all. Avoid qualifiers such as "mostly", "seemingly", "approximately", unless you really want to give a vague equivocal impression.

Concision: Please be brief. This comes with practice but a good start is to read a piece a while after you wrote it and see what you can trim out.

Opinions: BITS publishes material for use with Traveller. The only opinions BITS is interested in are newsletter reviews of relevant roleplaying products or events. This does not mean that the people in BITS don't have opinions, but our customers shouldn't discover that they've bought them along with a game book. That said, reviews have to be honest and objective, otherwise they're pointless. If you're reviewing a product or event, do so fearlessly. We want you to say what you really thought about it. Aside from correcting grammar and spelling, pruning out swearing, obvious libel and

anything irrelevant (we don't care what the counter-hand was wearing when you bought the game), your piece will appear as you wrote it.

Person: (*I/We, You, She/He/They*) Descriptive pieces should be written in the third person. Scene-setting vignettes can be in any person the author desires. Personal accounts (event reports, reviews) should be in the first person. The second person should be reserved for those rare occasions when you want to talk directly to the readers and give the piece a chatty feel. Despite knowing that it is grammatically incorrect to do so, BITS chooses not to hold that "he" implies "she", or that "his" implies "hers" and follows the emerging tendency in English to use "they" and "their" instead.

Who's Who: Address the player (the real person), character (persona controlled by the player) or Games Master (GM). The character may also be referred to as the player-character if you wish to subsequently use the abbreviation PC. Some of our books have used "referee" instead of Games Master, but our preference is now for the latter.

Slang, colloquial expressions and jargon: Avoid these. They don't export well and often date very quickly. This is particularly true of "atmospheric" terminology. No one calls heroin "horse" any more. Try not to use "sweet" except when being sarcastic or referring to the actual taste. Synthetic argots ("Hot Jets", "Chummer", "My little droogomundos" etc. – made-up names) should be used only where really necessary; an editor may still decide them to be inappropriate.

Humour: Writing amusingly is extremely difficult. By all means try, but if it's not funny it won't survive the editing process.

Swearing, Blasphemy, Offence and Libel: BITS publications aren't high art, so there's no good reason to include any of the aforementioned items. The experience of the games industry is that books sell better without them. BITS is also keen to stay out of court, so anything which, in an editor's judgement, could give offence or worse, cause of action, will be removed. This is especially important with libel. Neither will we offend religious sensibilities.

Irritating Mistakes and Similar: (This section is bound to grow!)

Abbreviations: Do not abbreviate the names of skills, attributes, advantages, disadvantages, quirks, etc. – write out their full names. If we have to abbreviate to save space then that's for us to decide.

Acronyms: Should be spelt out fully on first usage, e.g. Imperial Interstellar Scout Service (IISS). IISS should be used exclusively thereafter.

Alternative: This word means *one of two* things. A thing and its alternative. As in "alternating current". If there are more than two choices, use "choice", "option" or something similar.

Apostrophes: Indicate possession (usually) or a contraction (occasionally). Note that it's the other way round with "its" (contraction of "it is" is "it's" whereas the possessive, "belonging to it" is "its"). Apostrophes go at the end of group nouns, such as Wheeltappers and Shunters' Social Club. If a noun requiring an apostrophe ends in an "s" or a "z" the apostrophe goes after the consonant. Do not add another "s".

Attributes: Always capitalise attributes, skills, Advantages, Disadvantages, etc. and (for attributes) give their acronym when first used, e.g. "Strength (ST)".

Commas: Never put a comma (,) immediately before either "and" or "but". The last adjective is not separated from its noun by a comma but any preceding ones are, e.g. "A bug-eyed, slobbering, green monster with two arms, two legs and a tail".

Common abbreviations: e.g. introduces an example, whereas i.e. introduces an explanation or synonym. etc. means "and so on" but should only be used where a list is genuinely too long to give in full.

Damage/Hits: The terms "damage" and "hits" are interchangeable and mean the same thing (although different rule sets may apply them to different attributes).

Deviation: Don't get side tracked from the point of what you're writing to discuss a side issue, however interesting. If it really is that compelling, either change the material to incorporate it or use it for a second piece.

Dice: One die, several dice. Traveller (excepting TNE) uses only d6 so the preferred representation of N six-sided dice is ND rather than Nd6. In TNE, distinguish between types as follows: d4, d6, d8, d10, d12, d20, d%.

Equations: All equations have spaces between the numbers and the operators (+, −, ×) and should use parentheses to show clearly the equation order, e.g. $(2d - 7) \times 2$ means take 7 from a 2d6 roll, then multiply the result by two. Modifiers on their own do not have a space, e.g. “If TL < 5, DM +3. If TL > 8, DM -2”. In a Word document use × for multiplication; in plain text use “*” or “x”. In normal text, use “10 or less” or “10 or more”, “equals”, etc. rather than symbols such as “<”, “=”, “>”. Use these latter only in concise task descriptions. Avoid decimals where possible, e.g. “d6 / 2” in preference to “d6 × 0.5”.

Equipment (and Weapons): Our products are for all forms of Traveller, so avoid equipment and weapons that are specific to a particular rule set or (if absolutely necessary) at least give an equivalent for other rule sets. Don't write out complete sets of statistics for equipment or weapons if the GM can look them up in one of the standard rule books. If you have to use something new, or from a sourcebook few people will have, then summarise the equipment's functionality as a “sidebar” piece of text with its weight, cost, etc.

Hanging Prepositions are nothing to criticise people for. They're technically wrong but recasting sentences to avoid them can lead to inelegant copy.

Hyphenation: Hyphenated words have no spaces around the hyphen, e.g. “co-ordinated”. Compound adjectives are hyphenated, e.g. “a six-sided die”. Numeric ranges follow the same rule, e.g. “2-5” means a number between two and five inclusive. If you're worried about long and short hyphens, etc. our layout should do this automatically, but if you're really worried, use a single - to indicate a short hyphen and -- for a long one.

Lists: Numbered lists should be in the following format:

1. First item.
 2. Second item.
- etc.

Lists giving the results of die-rolls should use the following format:

- 1 – Result if roll a 1.
- 2 – Result if roll a 2.
- 3-4 – Result if roll a 3 or 4.

Numbers: Numbers below 10 should be spelt out (except for game mechanics, calculations, numbers of dice, etc.). Similarly, use “second” not “2nd” and “10th” not “tenth”. For numbers over 999 insert commas every three digits, e.g. 23,456. Don't use a high precision number when the precision is irrelevant, e.g. 23.456789 where it is best represented by 23.5 (note rounding). Large numbers can use suffixes, such as “k” for thousands or “M” for millions, e.g. Cr23,456,789 could be abbreviated Cr23.5M unless those last few credits are really important.

Passive Voice: If a piece written in the passive voice is exposed to a grammar checker, then the passage will be queried by the program. The active voice gives a snappier, more deliberate feel to prose, but passive is often appropriate. It isn't bad grammar either.

Punctuation: Punctuation goes *inside* speech marks (“ ”) and brackets (“parentheses”, if you prefer). The following shows our preferred use of quotation marks and commas, including interrupted and fading out speech:

“I have the weapons, rations and camouflage gear,” said the soldier, “but I need you to obtain the explosives.”
 “Okay,” said his companion. “When do we set off and –”
 “Quiet!” hissed the first. “I heard something...”

Repetition: Writers always have stock phrases which they use repeatedly without noticing. Writers often repeat the same words when describing the same things. If writers kept a thesaurus and dictionary handy and used them, they would get into the habit of using the same words and phrases less often. At the very least they should try to employ synonyms in consecutive sentences. Did this paragraph annoy you? If it did, you understand the reason for it.

Rules: Avoid creating new rules or skills where existing rules/skills can be adapted to cover the situation.

Spaces: Never use more than one space anywhere, in particular do not put double spaces after each period (full stop). If you use a plain-text word processor make sure it doesn't put extra spaces in for text justification. Never put a space or tab at the end of a line. Indents at the start of a line or tabular spacing should use only tabs – no spaces!

Speech marks (“ ”): Are only used when reporting speech or when insinuating that something in the text is not true or is somehow risible without actually saying so.

Split Infinitives: To authoritatively correct a misconception, there's nothing incorrect about these.

Super-Detailing: Don't close every loophole or fill in every detail. Every mystery solved is one less scenario our buyers can play, and one more thing that all our writers have to be consistent with in future publications.

Units of Measurement: BITS, like Traveller, uses SI measures, not Imperial. The only exception is where a GURPS-specific statistic (e.g. part of a character description) requires Imperial units. Units are always separated from the number by a space (e.g. "23 kg, 45 lb"), except for Imperial credits which use the form Cr23,456 (no space between Cr and the number; no full stop after Cr). The Traveller displacement ton for starship sizes must be abbreviated "dt" to avoid confusion with other types of ton/tonne. Plural units do not add an 's' – 23 kgs means 23 kilogramme-seconds in SI units; we don't like 45 lbs either – use 45 lb.

EXAMPLES

The following examples are all in plain text format – that's all we need from you. The important thing is to use the correct formatting – it saves an awful lot of our time putting back in hyphens, semi-colons vs. commas, etc. Here's an example character description for **PCs or very key NPCs**:

Molly

Rogue

Vargr Female, Age 35, Homeworld Sylea (Core 2118)

UPP 5B78A8, 1.63 m, 55 kg.

Admin-1, Brawling-1, Bribery-1, Broker-1, Medical-2, Pistol-1, Scrounge-4, Streetwise-4, Trader-1.

GT: ST 8, DX 14, IQ 12, HT 10, 5' 4", 120 lb.

Administration-12, Brawling-12, Electronic Ops (Medical)-13, Fast Talk-12, First Aid-13, Guns (Pistol)-12, Medical (Diagnosis)-13, Merchant-12, Scrounge-16, Streetwise-16.

Advantages: Charisma +2.

Disadvantages: Generosity (Charitable); Pacifism (Never fight unless attacked first); Delusion (Doesn't realise she's too soft-hearted to be a merchant); Stubbornness (Only obeys laws she agrees with).

Quirks: None.

Items: 7mm Target Pistol (long barrelled, custom balanced; hidden under your bed at home). Cr1.

Background: When you were at school, you showed promise at all those business studies things...

For **minor NPCs, whom the PCs will interact with several times**, use the following format:

Ernesto 'Shotfirer' (Diplomatic Representative)

Human Male, Age 26.

UPP 78C538, Brawling-2, Computer-1, Electronics-1, Ground Craft-1, Prospecting-3.

ST 10, DX 11, IQ 8, HT 15, Brawling-13, Computer Ops-12, Electronics Ops (Sensors)-12, Driving (Jeep)-12, Prospecting-15.

Open, honest and inexperienced with off-worlders but hardy and resolute. 'Shotfirer' refers to him being a senior mining engineer; he fires charges, not guns! Carries a simple handcomputer and comms unit.

For **minor NPCs who are simply guards, thugs and other expendables**, you only need the following:

Watcher 10/3 (13/15)

Wearing a large coat which looks like it could conceal a nasty weapon. Actually unarmed and carries only a secure communicator. Trained in unarmed combat but will only use this if life is in severe danger.

A compact form of attributes is used: A/S (*a/s*) where "A" is the average attribute value and "S" the level in their key skill(s). The equivalent GURPS data are "*a*" and "*s*" respectively. For example, the key attributes for an enlisted soldier might be Strength, Dexterity and Endurance. A soldier graded 8/3 (*11/15*) would therefore have a UPP of 888--- (*GT: ST 11, DX 11, HT 11*) and his key skills (e.g. weapons) will be at level 3 (*GT: 15*). Alternatively, a scientist's primary attributes might be Intelligence and Education, giving a UPP of ---88- (*GT: IQ 11*). Subsidiary attributes and skills will be one or more levels lower. The GM should only determine whether an NPC has a subsidiary skill if such a skill is specifically called for in the adventure. Where more detail is required, the text describing the NPC should cover this (as in the example above, which indicates that a key skill for the Watcher is unarmed combat, in addition to surveillance skills, etc.).

APPENDIX – THE BITS TASK SYSTEM

MegaTraveller (MT), Traveller: The New Era (TNE) and Marc Miller's Traveller (T4) all use a graduated system of task difficulty ratings – Average, Difficult, Formidable, etc. 'Classic' Traveller (CT) and GURPS Traveller (GT) use modifiers to the task rolls instead. The BITS Task System provides a simplified common ground for all these rule sets, using difficulty ratings with corresponding task modifiers for CT and GT as shown in Table 1. The means by which spectacular (*GT: critical*) success or failure are achieved are defined by the rule set used. Similarly, the GM should apply the rules for special tasks – opposed, co-operative, hasty, cautious, etc. – according to the rule set used. As always, these are only guidelines – the GM may alter any task roll as appropriate to enhance the game.

TABLE 1: TASK DIFFICULTIES

BITS Task Difficulty	T4 Task Difficulty	T4.1 Task Difficulty	GT Target Modifier	TNE Task Difficulty	MT Task Difficulty	CT Target Modifier
Easy	Easy (Auto)	Easy (1D)	+6	Easy	Simple	-4
Average	Average (2D)	Average (2D)	+3	Average	Routine	-2
Difficult	Difficult (2.5D)	Difficult (2.5D)	0	Difficult	Difficult	0
Formidable	Formidable (3D)	Formidable (3D)	-3	Formidable	Difficult	+2
Staggering	Impossible (4D)	Staggering (4D)	-6	Impossible	Formidable	+4
Impossible	(5D)	Hopeless (5D)	-9	Impossible	Impossible	+6
Hopeless	(6D)	Impossible (6D)	-12	Impossible	Impossible	+8

Maria Charles is forging a complex document which the GM rules is a Staggering task. Maria has Forgery-4 (*GT: Forgery-16*) and the relevant attribute (MT, T4) is INT 10 (TNE: INT 9).

CT: Task success is normally $2D + Skill \geq 8$. Maria requires $2D + Forgery \geq 12$ ($8 + 4$ for Staggering difficulty). Alternatively, the GM may prefer to apply the target modifier as a negative modifier on the dice roll, i.e. $2D + 4 - 4 \geq 8$.

MT: Staggering difficulty is equivalent to MT's Formidable (15+), thus the task is $2D + Skill + (Stat / 5) \geq 15$. For Maria this is: $2D + 4 + 2 \geq 15$.

TNE: Staggering difficulty is equivalent to TNE's Impossible, thus the task is $d20 \leq (Skill + Stat) \times \frac{1}{4}$. For Maria this is $d20 \leq 3$, i.e. $(9 + 4) / 4$ rounded down.

T4: Maria requires $4D \leq INT + Forgery$. (Note that T4's Staggering rating of 3.5D is ignored.)

GT: Maria requires $3D \leq Forgery + Target Modifier$, i.e. $3D \leq 16 - 6$.

Task definitions should always be used sparingly – the GM should be able to define the difficulty and required skills and equipment for most tasks using common sense. Where strange skills or equipment are needed, these can usually be listed, without requiring a full task definition. Where a full task definition is required, use the following format (you don't need to use the bold or italics formatting; plain text is fine):

To find a boar:

Difficult Recon (*GT: Tracking*), or

Difficult Hunting, or

Formidable Survival

+1 Difficulty if riding at full gallop.

+1 Difficulty if lost.

-1 Difficulty if moving slowly.

Spectacular Success: They have surprised a boar and have one round to act before it reacts.

Success: They have found boar tracks and can begin following them.

Failure: No tracks found.

Spectacular Failure: They have become lost.

+1 Difficulty indicates a harder task (e.g. an Average task becomes Difficult) whereas -1 Difficulty is an easier task (e.g. Difficult would become Average).

NOTE: This system has been extensively play-tested but suggestions for refinements are always welcome.