
MEDIATRIX

A Live Action Role Play

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This is the Staff Handbook (v1.1) for As If Productions' "MEDIATRIX."
Individual supplements to this book will be issued depending on role.

OVERTURE: MEDIATRIX IS THE MESSAGE

The Role-Playing Game (RPG) is one of the design models most often mentioned by interactive experience designers, and yet somehow this arcane artform remains one of the most misunderstood. Serious psychologists use role-play as an important tool in therapy, while gonzo GameMasters and Nintendo-generation youths tell us that interactive role-playing games -- in which players control the actions of their own "alter-ego" characters in complex simulations of imaginary worlds -- are the "wave of the future," once presentation technology catches up with programming potential. It certainly can't be argued that aspects of these games have begun to creep steadily into more traditional areas of entertainment design. One of the recent, resultant hybrid-artforms is the LARP (Live Action Role-Play), which combines elements of RPGs with "follow-about theater" to create a unique form of immersive experience: in the state of Fiction Immersion, the traditional lines between actor and audience -- reality and illusion -- are blurred completely beyond recognition.

Mediatrix is an allegorical head-trip to a satirical scenario of our internetworked multimedia future. Participants role-play the mighty officers of international industries and globally-networked grassroots organizations, wielding tremendous power and influence in a warped world of politics, programming, and propaganda (oh yeah -- did we mention paranoia?)

For February's meeting, Tod will introduce the group to the role-playing system, and will take reservations and requests for characters. For March's meeting -- from 6:00 to 10:00 PM on the 17th -- the game will be presented/played. Yes, right there in Joe's apartment. Think you're confused about the state of the world now? Just wait 'til you enter the metaverse of Mediatrix! NOTE: Due to game and space requirements, no more than thirty people will be admitted, and all attendees must RSVP and commit for both sessions. Contact Joe Futerman at 213.962.7623.

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SECTION 1: WHO ARE WE AND WHAT THE HELL ARE WE DOING?

This section explains some of the operating principles and motives behind MEDIATRIX, and details the specific game-mechanical roles which various Staff Members will perform during game play.

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AUTOMATING THE GAMEMASTER

On the control level, this phrase describes what we are trying to do. As I have often explained (and prophesized), the Cast & Crew are extensions of the GM, who will one day be replaced by programs and dedicated hardware. In other words, we -- all of us together -- may be taken to represent the complex three-dimensional computer-operated Role-Playing Game of the future. We are a "holodeck." And like the characters in the holodeck, we do not know that we are only simulations; Co-Actor Characters will exhibit knowledge of only their own individual information. This is one of the key tricks to successful Role-Playing -- drawing a line between what you know and what your character knows.

In a standard Role-Playing Game, the GM does just about everything. He designs the game system, setting the limits of possible activities; he designs the game world, setting the scene against which the action occurs; he teaches and translates the rules for the Players; he writes the PlotForms which will become the stories; he narrates, describes the settings, conveys the mood and plays all NPCs whom the Players meet; he determines which rules to use to simulate specific situations, and when to use them; and he judges or referees the Players' performances, assigning rewards or experience as the situation merits. Obviously, in a presentation as complex (relatively) as MEDIATRIX, it would be impossible for one person to do all these things. That's why we are a group. By splitting the responsibilities of the GM into discrete units, we can lighten the individual workload and still Master the Game.

Researchers and developers are working feverishly on various forms of interactive fiction systems right now. There are already RPGs available which run on PCs, Macs, and home videogame units such as the Nintendo NES2 and Sega GENESIS. Fujitsu is spending millions of dollars to bring interactive electronic media into every home in Japan, and they already run *Habitat*; an electronic communication system in which participants see computer-rendered cartoons of each other while speaking. ICOM Simulations, manufacturers of interactive computer games, are designing something they call a "Story Engine." Jaron Lanier & VPL created a device called RB2 ("Reality Built for Two"), which allows two people to interact with each other in a realtime-rendered graphic environment, and Carnegie-Mellon University is conducting attempts to create the "personalities" of artificial characters. As interface technology progresses, Virtual Reality (which is approached via "MultiMedia") will become faster, cheaper, and more convincing. It threatens (or promises) to change many of our assumed ways of dealing with the world. Read Howard Rheingold's Virtual Reality or Brenda Laurel's Computers as Theater -- you'll see what I mean. This is our chance to say something about where we think the world might be going with all this technology. A chance to grab the model and rearrange it before the pieces all solidify and trap us in a mindless maze of corporate garbage -- like television. Remember Wild Palms? It *can* happen here.

The whole point of MEDIATRIX is that we want to give people a socially-critical glimpse of what our virtual future might be like, to force them to examine the ethical and psychological questions posed by obsequious MultiMedia, and also to demonstrate, using a *human system*, some techniques and approaches we'll want to use when we

create the warez which will revolutionize the entertainment industry. There are people in laboratories and thinktanks all over the world working on the technical ends of these questions right now. Let's strip away all the eye-goggling tech for a few hours and show people the human side of the equation, lest it get lost in the transmission.

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SOME NOTES ON PERSPECTIVE

MEDIATRIX is, above all and from the audience's point of view, a Role-Playing Game. In the typical RPG there is one GameMaster (GM), who creates and populates the game world, narrates the flow of events, plays all NPC (Non-Player Character) roles, and interprets PC actions based upon the game's rules. Because of the scale and detail of this project it has been necessary to divide the GM's responsibilities amongst a number of Staff Members, each of whom has a set of relatively specific "job". These jobs will be detailed below.

But first, let's consider a few things about the overall presentation.

The game is a large-scale simulation of a possible future reality. Although it is a "game", and we are indeed "playing" it with the audience, we must never lose sight of a few important facts:

1. Their entertainment is more important than ours. We will obviously have a lot of fun developing and displaying our characters to the public, and embroiling people in our own little schemes, but if it comes to a choice, it's always the audience's enjoyment that counts. Take your favorite *Tags* -- character idiosyncracies and habits -- and turn them outward. Take that great exchange you had with another Co-Actor and work it up; make it explain the characters' relationship, drop an interesting hint or clue into it (true or not), make it work for an external observer (because that's what most of the audience will spend most of their time doing).
2. We are not playing "against" them. Though we may at times oppose their efforts, this is always done for a dramatic/story-logical reason. Co-Actor Characters are more like the pieces on the game board than the opponent who moves them (that's the GM's job) -- they move according to their own character structures. Once set in motion, they continue on their motivation- and information-driven courses, without malice or prejudgement. In the VR RPGs of the future, all of the NPCs will be artificially intelligent programmed constructs. It may (or not) help for Co-Actors to think of their own characters this way.
3. The Cast & Crew are extensions of the GM, who will himself be replaced one day by programs and dedicated hardware. This is a major part of the thrust which MEDIATRIX is based on. The event is part entertainment, part experiment, and part demonstration. The idea is that, by showing how we can plot and control a developing, open-ended story in realtime, we can influence the programmers and designers of MultiMedia Entertainment and Virtual Reality systems to consider the complex aesthetics, dynamics and techniques of this newly developing artform, and also give people a chance to talk about -- or act out -- their fantasies, wishes or fears of our electronic future.

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STAFF MEMBER JOB DESCRIPTIONS

GAMEMASTER ("GM"):

The GM is the Designer and "Central Processing Unit" of the game world. In MEDIATRIX, the GM's functions have been divided and removed from direct view, but they are still present. During the game, much of the GM's time will be spent making Plot Direction and Information Release decisions, injecting PlotSeeds into play, keeping track of gametime, determining the effects of large-scale Campaign Events, and recording the outcomes of Player activities.

GAME OPERATORS ("GameOps"):

GameOps are essentially "Co-GMs", who are easily identified by their AIP Staff uniforms and clipboards. GameOps must have a good working knowledge of the Game Mechanics. Their job is to use the game mechanics to satisfactorily resolve any Player Character actions which must be simulated. They will also be called upon by Players to explain aspects of the game rules when specific actions are being considered, and to explain aspects of the game world itself. GameOps report significant Plot Events to the GameMaster.

CO-ACTORS:

Co-Actors play the Principle Characters -- the NPCs around whom the Primary Plots (qv.) revolve. They are fully mobile, and are more likely to wear costumes than uniforms. Co-Actors must be fairly conversant with the Game Mechanics, but should try whenever possible to appear to be no more than whatever their character is (it is, after all, a role). Their job is to interact with Players, so that they can (A) learn what the Players' conversations and plans are, (B) inform Players of possible options which hadn't occurred to them, and (C) directly or indirectly control the flow of events through the Players. NPCs possess primary and secondary PlotSeeds, and will be directed as to when these elements should be activated. NPCs also possess game-functional, as well as story-dramatic, roles. These roles are detailed under CO-ACTOR CHARACTERS below.

SUPPORT STAFF:

There will be a few Staff Members (hopefully!) who have no specific job at all. Whenever something is needed, something goes wrong, someone must be located, etc, one of these Support Personnel will be dispatched to take care of the problem. In an extreme Plot Emergency, a Support Staffer might be called into the game to play a badly-needed ad hoc character.

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SECTION 2: THE CHARACTERS

Characters are divided into two main species: the Co-Actors play predetermined characters also known as NPCs ("Non-Player Characters") -- there are only two such characters in MEDIATRIX. Audience members (also known as Players) play PCs ("Player Characters"). Each species of character will be detailed in its own section below.

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CO-ACTOR CHARACTERS

The following segments describe the two Co-Actor Characters which are intricately involved in controlling the game world of MEDIATRIX.

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VICTOR "THE BOSS" HELIOS

Victor Helios is the Unseen CEO of *The Corporation*, the "supergroup" which represents the united upper eschelons of all the major international corporations and regulatory bodies. In other words, they are the economic-military-industrial conspiracy, the corpocracy, the establishment, the second wave, the propaganda machine, the gnomes of zurich, the mafia, the government, the Illuminati. In the world of MEDIATRIX, "The Corporation" is known/rumored to exist in roughly the same way as all of these groups; one can always find people who claim -- or even claim to *prove* -- to be directly involved with The Corporation; but there are always other people who claim that such conspiratorial theories are nonsense. The Boss controls the global empire of The Corporation in a myriad ways both straightforward and convoluted, but his chief influence on global affairs (and game events) comes through five main channels; three "Megacorporations" and two "Exchange Zones."

MEGACORPS: The Corporation controls the three major entities which make up the vast majority of the global commercial market and established social control structures. Like business entities in the real world, these companies engage in all manner of overt and covert mercantile operations; production, sales, distribution, advertising, sponsorship and corporate warfare. These global entities are known as "MegaCorps," and are directly under the control of specific Player Characters who report directly to The Boss. For details on each of these entities, see "MEGACORPORATIONS" in Section 4.

1. GLOBAL NATION PRODUCTS (GNP): General Retail; Manufactured Goods
2. MEGAMEDIA: Mass Media; News and Entertainment
3. INRI: Electronic World Church

EXCHANGE ZONES: The Corporation is also the dominant force in two of the four worldwide "Exchange Zones," which are of primary importance to game play. In fact, the principle game-mechanical function of The Boss is to direct and monitor activity in these two zones. For details on each of these Zones, see "EXCHANGE ZONES" in Section 5.

1. THE BANK: Commercial Financial Institutions and Registrars
2. THE MARKET: Commercial Wholesale/Retail and Stock Market

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SISTER MARY MUSE

A much-publicized figure who is known to most of the world only as a metaphor in popular fiction, Sister Mary does indeed exist, and wields a lot of very real power in "The Underground." This decentralized network of public and covert organizations is comprised of most of the world's anarchists, hackers, revolutionaries, cryptopunks, socialists, fundamentalists, pirates, new-ageists and other zealots, all of whom agree on practically nothing except the following two facts: (1) The Corporation cannot be trusted, and (2) Sister Mary *can* be. With a

motleyed background in the fields of computer science, mass communications, political activism, popular music, religious cult leadership and propaganda, Sister Mary is the center of an amazingly complex system of underground activity, and has grown to become an underground saint of sorts -- a cyber-savvy Jean-Paul Marat for the revolutionaries of the twenty-first century. Directly or indirectly, Sister Mary influences affairs in all corners of the underworld, although her chief means of communication and control also include five channels; three "Organizations" and two "Exchange Zones."

WORLD ORGANIZATIONS: Known in the game as "Orgs," these entities are The Underground's principle means of rallying local SIBs ("Special Interest Bloks") into manageable, functional units. Although they are not precluded from engaging in commercial production and exchange, they are at a disadvantage to do so. Orgs generally act by planning and executing "Happenings" in the form of information releases, public appearances and artistic and/or terroristic "productions," which affect the flow of rumor and motivation in the game world. They are directly under the control of specific Player Characters who report directly to Sister Mary. For more details on these entities, see "WORLD ORGS" in Section 4.

1. THE REDISTRIBUTIONISTS: Militant Hardcore Marxists
2. CHANNEL 23: Pirate Media Artists and Technicians
3. THE AQUARIAE: Federation of Alternative Religions

EXCHANGE ZONES: The Underground is the dominant force in two of the four worldwide "Exchange Zones," which are of primary importance to game play. In fact, the principle game-mechanical function of Sister Mary is to direct and monitor activity in these two zones. For more detail on these Zones, see "EXCHANGE ZONES" in Section 5.

1. THE STREET: Rumor/Gossip/Communication; Illegal Goods & Services
2. THE NET: Rumor/Gossip/Communication; DataStorage; Appropriation

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PLAYER CHARACTER CLASSES

The PCs -- Player Characters -- are divided into three main groups known as Classes, representing their basic personal and professional interests; Corporates, Undergrounders, and FreeAgents.

CORPORATES are characters whose game interests are primarily professional and economic, and whose makeup involves such motivators as Money, Power, Mass Appeal, Authority, Control, Production, and Marketing. Generally, they fall under the aegis of The Corporation, as controlled by The Boss. They may be Board Members or High-Level Executives for any of the three major MegaCorps (GNP, MegaMedia or INRI), or they may represent specific divisions of these companies. They are the forces of corporate business, mass media, mass marketing, centralization, and the military-industrial world-nation-consumer-state. Corporate characters are known colloquially as "Suits."

UNDERGROUNDERS are characters whose interests are primarily anti-establishment, and whose makeup involves such motivators as Personal Freedom, Anarchy, Barter, Revolution and Spiritualism/Metaphysics. Generally, they fall under the aegis of The Underground, as influenced by Sister Mary Muse. They may be high-ranking members of any of the three major Orgs (the Redistributionists, Channel 23 or the Aquariae),

or they may represent specific SIB groups with their own mix of local talents and resources. They are the forces of decentralization, socialism, humanitarianism, DIY-ism and grass-root-ism, and their roster includes many fundamentalist and fringe groups of various types. Undergrounders are known colloquially as "Beards" or "Books."

FREEAGENTS are apolitical or undecided characters without employers or affiliations, whose motivators are either too specific or too general to be easily placed in one of the two supergroups. Their skills and functions are selected from the same list of "third party" professions used for NPC Characters, including such specialized types as Law Officers, Attorneys, Hackers, Private Eyes, Mercenaries, Writers, Independent Producers (of hardware, software or entertainment media), Academicians, Entrepreneurs or Celebrities. A certain minimum number of FreeAgent characters will be issued in any case, simply because part of the game dynamics involve the recruitment of these unattached characters into the schemes and machinations of the supergroups (and conversely, the retirement of Corp or Org personnel into the FreeAgent Class). Due to their unique motivators and lack of direct superiors, FreeAgents bring a degree of unpredictability into the game; they are harder to second-guess and control than most characters, but they also possess unusual skills and experience which make them virtual necessities in specific circumstances. FreeAgents are usually just called "FreeAgents," but are sometimes referred to as "Homeless."

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PLAYER CHARACTER FORMS

Each Player Character will possess a sheet known as a PCF ("Player Character Form"), on which hir character traits and affiliations are recorded. Each PCF includes spaces for the following specific data:

Name (Players will use their real names to facilitate play)
Profession
Employer(s) (corps)
Affiliation(s) (orgs)
Clout (a rating from 1 to 10)
CyberSpace Skill (a rating from 1 to 10)
Bank Access Code
Bank Account Balance
Net Password
Initial Rumor/Motivator
Background (a short description)
Notes

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SECTION 3: PLOT PROCEDURES

This section details the general definitions used to understand and create Plots, and the procedures by which we will involve Players in the Plots we have generated.

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PLOTTING IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

In traditional theater, the actors get off relatively easy; the playwright has already indicated exactly what events are going to occur, in what order, and what their characters' responses will be to them. GameMasters (and, by extension, Co-Actors) don't have the entire story handed to them like that. They have to be ready for abrupt changes in Player goals, motivations, and morale, as well as problems arising directly from the story, such as codes or puzzles which must be solved, missing pieces of information or pure lack of good ideas on the Players' parts. The only way to control such an apparently shapeless mess is to create a stable infrastructure of information which serves as a frame upon which we build our stories. In my own terminology, the principle pieces in the frame are called *PlotSeeds*, *PlotPoints*, *PlotLines*, *PlotTrees* and *PlotForms*. During the game, we control most of the growth and action along these lines (at a meta-game level) by cunningly injecting *Information*, *Objects* and *Events* into the world. In the game-mechanics of MEDIATRIX, these functions are handled by means of *PlotCards*.

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WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

A typical open-ended Plot (like the ones we'll be building) is a tree-like structure which begins at a starting point and grows in a straight line to a branching node, where it branches off into smaller lines, each of which come to further nodes and divide fractally. To continue the analogy, a clue or rumor heard by a Player (if acted upon) is a *PlotSeed* (the seed of that entire story), and each branching node is a *PlotPoint* (where choices or circumstances may alter the course of the Player's Line). The entire realm of possibilities -- most of which will not actually be "climbed," or even perceived, by the Player -- is the overall *PlotTree*, and the path actually taken by the Player as she moves through this structure is hir *PlotLine*. Since each Player Character creates hir own PlotTree around hir own PlotLine, the gameworld is actually an interwoven network of many such trees -- a "MetaTree" called a *PlotForm*.

These concepts will be put to much use as development progresses; many of your PlotSeeds are already in place, and specific PlotForms will be drawn out and worked up as we go.

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PLOT CARDS

As mentioned above, Information, Objects and Events are injected into play by use of PlotCards. These cards, most of which are generally and easily available to Players (some few are designed only for specific circumstances), fall into four main categories called Card Types. A Card's Type is indicated by its color.

COLOR	CARD TYPE
=====	=====
Pink	= Rumor
Yellow	= Item
Blue	= Program
Green	= "Ace"

In addition to its text body, every Card bears an identifying character string called its "Card Index" (actually a mix of letters and numbers). The Card Index is printed in small type at the bottom of the Card. Players record their Card Indexes in their Annual Reports, allowing us to track plot elements in circulation.

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RUMOR CARDS

Rumor Cards are the most common Card Type in the game. They contain "hard data" which will generally be use to at least one active Player in the game, and which may also be potentially harmful to at least one other Player. Most of these Cards contain a piece of information (or disinformation!) on a specific Corp, Org, or person; and they will therefore tend to become highly desired by two diametrically-opposed groups.

Rumors are obsequious and cheap, and it is even possilbe for Players to create their own new Rumors; but Rumors which have been "proven true" are known as "Intel" and are suddenly worth a lot more -- especially to the groups directly mentioned (or directly opposed to those mentioned) in the Rumor. Unfortunately (or fortunately), "Rumor" Cards and "Intel" Cards are indistinguishable from each other -- only a Player's experiences and conclusions will ultimately tell them apart. All Rumor Cards fit one of the following forms, with specific variables filled in as indicated below:

<corp/org>'s <atrocities/crimes>
<corp/org>'s <good deeds>
<corp/org> meeting with <corp/org>
<corp/org> working on <project/action>
<person> is a "plant" for <corp/org>
<corp/org> possesses <ace>
<corp/org> controlled by <person/corp/org>
<corp/org> is on its way <up/out> / stock market tip
<corp/org/person>'s bank balance
<corp/org/person>'s bank access code
<corp/org/person>'s net password
Dossier on <corp/org/person>
<person>'s <atrocities/crimes/vices>
<person>'s <good deeds>
<person> is on <person/corp/org>'s hitlist
<item/program> exists
<item/program>'s location/owner

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ITEM CARDS

Item Cards represent specific important physical objects within the game world. While most of these Cards are *Multiple* (ie; the same or similar data exists on a number of Cards), a few of them are one-of-a-kind Items (indicated by asterisks in the list below). These five *Special Items* each possess their particular powers and game rules (see SPECIAL ITEMS in Section 5).

Item Cards are expected to circulate throughout the game world pretty freely, and each bears a Cost in Dollars to facilitate this circulation. For Players, these Costs are merely suggestions; Players

are encouraged to jack the prices around in any way that works for them, but for purposes of The Market and The Street (ie; Exchange Zones) these costs are treated as the "real" cost of the Item. Items may be purchased by Players at these indicated costs, but if they are resold to the Exchange Zone again, they will be worth exactly 1/2 of their original value. Item Cards include the following:

Telecommunications Satellite Uplink
Private Telecommunications Satellite
BioRAM Chip (New state-of-the-art processor)
<#> of Stock Shares in <corp>
<False Bank Account>
<False Net Account>
<False ID>
<sci/tech> Lab
Multimedia Studio
<Hot Title>
<Secure Means of Transport>
<Secure Means of Communication>
<Drug Shipment>
Nuclear Warhead
Aladdin's Lamp *
The Ark of the Covenant *
The Crystal Skull of Ixtlan *
The Monkey's Paw *
The Necronomicon of Abdul Alhazred *

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PROGRAM CARDS

Program Cards are actually a subclass of Item Cards. As might be obvious, they contain specific computer programs which are of use to any Players who are net.inclined. With one exception (indicated by an asterisk below), these cards are all of the *Multiple* variety, and possess suggested Costs just like other Item Cards (for information on the AIOS Card, see SPECIAL PROGRAMS in Section 5). Program Cards include:

"Password Hacker" <different strengths, from 1 to 10, are available>
"Virus" <different strengths, from 1 to 10, are available>
"DataHound" <different strengths, from 1 to 10, are available>
"Custom Operating System" <different types are available>
"Broadband Pirate" (required for jamming media signals)
AIOS (Artificially Intelligent Operating System) *

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"ACES"

Aces are special bonus cards which bestow individual boons or unusual forms of assistance upon their possessors. Most of these cards are of the *Multiple* variety, although two of them are special one-of-a-kind cases. Aces may indeed be bought and sold, but this is not openly encouraged; they do not possess set prices and are rather subjective in value. Ace Cards include the following:

Company of Mercenaries or Fanatic Supporters
Wizard Hacker
<Unexpected Source of Funding>

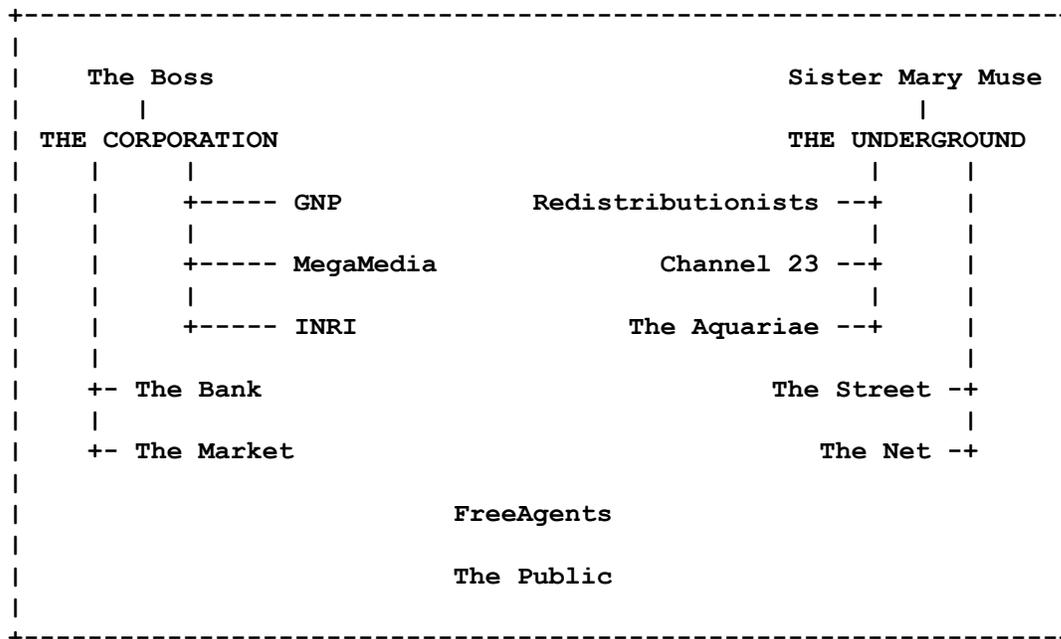
Good PR/Media Attention
 Public Recognition/Award/Honor
 Celebrity Support/Spokesperson
 <Lead to Needed NPC Specialist>
 <Major Supply of Minor Resource/Raw Material>
 Plant/Deep Agent in <corp/org>
 Sigil of The Corporation *
 Sigil of The Underground *

These last two Aces are Special Cards, indicating that the bearer has been granted special immunity privileges; they will only enter play if given out by their respective Co-Actor (The Boss or Sister Mary Muse), and are non-transferable unless okayed by same. For more information on their use, see SPECIAL ACES in Section 5.

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SECTION 4: THE WORLD OF MEDIATRIX

This section details those major entities of the Game World with which all Characters should be familiar. The basic interrelationships of the various groups in the game are indicated in the table below:



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MEGACORPORATIONS

For many decades now, the political, military and economic power of the superstates has been faltering throughout the industrialized world. Struggling to maintain livelihood, debt-ridden nations have poured massive amounts of money into technologically advanced fields which would give them "an edge." Of course, since the only entities capable of supporting such progressive and monumental projects were diversified, privately-owned (as opposed to nationally controlled) corporations, the governments in question quickly became their chief supporters, and then later, their dependent slaves. MegaCorps grew

and proliferated in this self-perpetuating environment, expanding and mutating like viruses within a host body. It was not a far step between influencing the laws made and actually making them, nor between selling a candidate and inventing one. In most nations, this insidious process escalated for nearly half a century until a government eventually reached a point where it was incapable of adequately handling its expenses, controlling its people, or defending its borders. Set in their antiquated ways, societies carried on as they always had, and assumed it was their elected officials who held the real power. Meanwhile, the MegaCorps were growing more wealthy, more technologically capable, more visible and more diversified by leaps and bounds - eventually spanning the globe, free of the ethical and economic responsibilities of nations. Today, regional governments exist as little more than figureheads, holding only a small amount of power when contrasted to the immense resources and ploys utilized by the MegaCorps. Three MegaCorps, controlled largely by the dictates of The Corporation, are embroiled in the affairs of the game:

1. GLOBAL NATION PRODUCTS. The principle provider of manufactured commercial goods for the entire world, GNP is a megacorporation comprised of several thousand semiautonomous supermarket and department store chains, as well as a few thousand vast-area mail-order outlets and countless shopping malls of all types and sizes. The fastest-growing division of GNP for the last ten years has been the GNP-IO ("Interactive Outlet"); a network of syndicated cross-platform interactive shopping channels -- of which at least one is available in every single city on Earth -- the stations' IO systems are directly tied to the nearest GNP retail outlets and stockhouses. Their advertising slogan is "We Have What You Need."

2. MEGAMEDIA. The dominant provider of home entertainment programming for the entire world, MegaMedia is also a veritable monopoly, responsible for the production and out-casting (both "broad" and "narrow") of over 80% of the world's commercial radio, television, and interactive network programs and services. They are comprised of a gigantic number of major production studios and "overground" media distributors of all kinds. Their advertising slogan is "Your Window To The World."

3. INRI. Due largely to the influence of American religious tolerance, traditional congregations of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries were marked by a serious reduction in participation as nonsectarian belief systems crept into popularity. In reaction to this new wave of "unitarian" belief, influential clergy of the world's major religions founded INRI ("International Nominal Religions, Incorporated") to serve as a worldwide nondenominational spiritual services provider while retaining aspects of their old dogmatic belief systems. Near 90% of the world's faithful are now "Inrists," who use interactive home media machines called PSAs ("Personal Spiritual Assistants") to fill in the variables which "personalize" the generic services created by INRI. In addition to their regular broadcasts of PSA-edited syndicated religious programming, INRI also maintains dial-up services where individuals with specific concerns can download "personalized" SAPs ("Spiritual Assistance Procedures") for a nominal charge. Governance of the draconian INRI codex is handled by an internally-appointed panel known as ROTA (the Religious Organization of Theological Associates).

WORLD ORGS

Orgs are the grass-roots organizations, popular movements and peoples' rights groups which spring up from the ranks of the motivated-dissatisfied around the world. They are the underground's best line of defense against the tremendous might of the Megacorporations, and have therefore been set up almost as direct mirror-opposites of the "aboveground" groups which struggle to oppress them. Orgs tend to have much less money at their disposal than corps, but what they lack in finances they can often make up for in dedication and perseverance; most Org personnel are volunteers who do their jobs because they are needed, because they serve some public good; and not for some monetary reward. And although they lack the economic status to pull strings at The Bank and in The Market, Orgs tend to have a much closer grasp of what's happening on The Street and in The Net, and they are therefore better able to quickly circulate Rumors and plan Actions. There are three major Orgs in MEDIATRIX:

1. THE REDISTRIBUTIONISTS. A vastly popular revolutionary group of radical fundamentalist socialists (NeoMarxists), Redistributionists like to fancy themselves the Robin Hoods of the massmarket MEDIATRIX world. This paramilitary Org performs regular Redistribution Missions, striking mainly against defensively-routed shipments of GNP products bound for upscale territories, and releasing their takings in the hastily-assembled freeform festivals known as GRABS ("General Redistribution And Bounty Societies"), which are considered by regular participants to form a sort of floating virtual community. The Redistributionists, like most Orgs, keep in touch with each other and plan large-scale Actions via The Net (qv.), and are on good terms with many third-party groups in economically stressed areas.

2. CHANNEL 23. "Channel 23" is not really a channel at all, but rather the name worn proudly by a large group of loosely organized media pirates, artists and technicians around the world (taken from a short-lived but long-remembered TV series of the 1980's, called "Max Headroom"). Most members of C23 (as it is often called) are really nothing more than smartassed corporate kids with expensive home media manipulation systems and lots of free time, but the upper strata of this group include some of the world's foremost codehackers and media pirates. Occasionally several SIB units will gather together for a "net.jam," in which their conglomerated equipment arsenals provide enough power and access to literally take over established channels, jamming the MegaMedia signals and providing surprised locals with a taste of truly alternative programming. In this way, C23 is capable of providing airtime to Orgs and messages which would otherwise be shunned by the media and ignored by the masses.

3. THE AQUARIAE. Known by the above-ground media as "the largest and most influential cult menace in the world," the confederacy of mystical and metaphysical SIBs known as The Aquariae is really a sort of global communications system, support group and civil rights watchdog for persons of "alternative" spiritual inclination (read: non-INRI). The diverse membership of this loose Org includes Astrologers, Alchemists, Animists and Animalists, Qabalists, Gnostics, Druids, Demonologists, Wiccans, Sorcerors, Santarians, Satanists, SubGenii and Ceremonial Magicians, as well as practitioners of a thousand other offically-unrecognized belief systems, who have banded together in recognition of their need for a defensive network.

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SECTION 5: GAME MECHANICS

This Section details specific game rules and procedures, some of which will be known generally to Players.

* * *

TIME SCALE

In order to simulate the dynamic actions of a complex environment such as the world economy, it has been necessary to create a condensed artificial time scale. While the game is running, the following scale is in effect:

1 hour = 1 year.

This means every five minutes of realtime equals a month of gametime.

It is assumed that most Player Characters will arrange at least one or two significant deals or actions each hour. Important game-mechanical tasks such as determination of taxes and relative power ratings will be handled on an hourly/yearly basis. At the end of every hour, Players will be instructed to report their current status to their immediate superiors, who will in turn report to their superiors, and so on until all the forces of The Corporation and The Underground have been tallied. While the PCs are gathering and turning in their data, Co-Actors will be receiving new sets of PlotCards from the GameMaster and arranging their strategies for the upcoming hour. New Year's Eve parties will cover the ensuing transitional chaos. Game play will then continue.

* * *

GAME SCHEDULE

Pregame	Early comers will receive their characters immediately, and will have a chance to check out the grounds and devour the refreshments before play begins.
6:00	Character Assignment. Pregame Briefing and Q & A. Initial Cash Withdrawals. Anticipated Semi-Covert Pregame Player Machinations.
7:00	January 1st, 2014. New Year's celebrations as Act 1 begins.
7:55	December 1st, 2014. Players receive notice to prepare for annual reports.
8:00	January 1st, 2015. Annual Reports are turned in. New Year's celebrations as Act 2 begins. Taxes for 2014 are assessed.
8:55	December 1st, 2015. Players receive notice to prepare for annual reports.
9:00	January 1st, 2016. Annual Reports are turned in.

New Year's celebrations as Act 3 begins.
Taxes for 2015 are assessed.

9:55 December 1st, 2016.
Players receive notice to prepare for final annual reports.

10:00 January 1st, 2017.
Annual Reports are turned in.
New Year's celebrations as the game ends.
Taxes for 2016 are assessed.
Final calculations are made.

Postgame Any Players who care to remain are invited to participate in the postgame debriefing session, in which everyone -- Game Staff included -- will have a chance to explain how the game felt from their point of view.

Information gathered from the Annual Reports and debriefing session will be scrambled and arrayed in every clever way we can think of to look at them, and will be handed out at April's meeting (they will also be posted to Aleph@pyramid.com and on the IICS/LA ONLINE BBS).

* * *

MONEY

Fictional money ("World Dollars" -- a global currency) will be issued for use in the game. In addition, Players and Co-Actors will have access to their bank accounts, and will be able to engage in both cash and electronic transactions. Players will be able to contract each other, pay each other, and even illegally access each other's accounts (if they obtain someone else's account number).

Note that although the printed money is a lot of fun and adds a degree of verisimilitude to the game proceedings, it is not necessary to rely on it -- monetary transactions may be performed "electronically" through The Bank. Players should be considerate of the fact that only a limited number of bills have been printed for use in the game, and are asked to leave most of their money in The Bank until or unless they have a specific need for cash (this makes it a lot easier for us to accurately assess taxes, as well). The number of bills printed (of each denomination) are as follows:

DENOMINATION	HOW MANY
=====	=====
\$100	200
\$1,000	200
\$10,000	100
\$100,000	100

EXCHANGE ZONES

There are two main systems of exchange and circulation running through the game world; these are MONEY and CARDS. As systems of exchange go, Money is fairly self-explanatory, and the Cards have been detailed in Section 3. However, a few notes are in order to explain exactly how the dynamics of these systems will be simulated.

EXCHANGE ZONES are (allegedly) "neutral" sites in which various specific types of transactions are enacted (generally involving both

Cards and Money). Each of the two main supergroups controls two Exchange Zones to a fairly great degree; this is accomplished by making the Co-Actors directly responsible for the Zones. The Boss, through The Corporation, controls the Exchange Zones known as *The Market* and *The Bank*, while Sister Mary Muse uses The Underground to control the Exchange Zones known as *The Street* and *The Net*. In this way, Co-Actors are capable of influencing the flow of game events by simply withholding certain Cards and pushing others. The Exchange Zones and their pertinent rules are detailed in the segments below.

THE BANK represents all commercial financial institutions, as well as all storage and security institutions and notary services, and is also our means of assessing taxes at the end of each game year. Players use The Bank to store their money and valuable possessions, and to register the formation or dissolution of Corps and Orgs. Access to stored Money and Cards is allowed only by means of an Access Code which is originally known only to its legal possessor (these codes may, however, be hacked and/or redistributed by those with the knowledge and motives to do such things).

THE MARKET represents any and all commercial means of marketing, distribution and sales, including all wholesale and retail outlets of all kinds -- physical and electronic -- as well as The Stock Market. Players use The Market to buy and sell all "multiple"-type Items and Programs, as well as all manner of sundry goods such as they may manufacture themselves, and to participate in Stock Exchange.

THE STREET represents all rumor mills, watering holes, industry gossips, small/local media channels and sources of urban folklore. Although specific Items and Programs may be found for sale on The Street (especially stolen Items, or illegal Items such as tactical weapons and drug shipments -- constituting the "Black Market"), as a general rule this Zone is used chiefly for the exchange of Rumors and Intel, as well as messages and plans of action for Undergrounders and FreeAgents.

THE NET represents all non-private computer systems which are tied into the global telecommunications matrix, from small local BBS's to vast networks like The Internet, FIDONet, CERFNet, etc. Although many of these networks are of common knowledge and use, the progressive and amorphous computer underground (CU) has built an incredible number of secret systems throughout the global matrix over the decades, thereby ensuring that there is no way to accurately assess the *true* Net. And although public awareness and "computer-friendliness" has reached a level where a certain amount of fundamental knowledge can be assumed on the part of the average citizen, wizards of the deep Net are still capable of pulling off tasks which both astound and infuriate. Players use The Net to store Rumors, Intel and Programs, and to engage in acts of cybernetic business, travel and recreation, as well as intrusion, appropriation, data sabotage and media piracy. Like The Bank, each Player is given a Net Account with a specific Password. And like the Account Codes given out by The Bank, these Passwords are by no means infallible to the clever and insistent.

* * *

PLAYER ACTIONS

The following Segments provide specific rules for all manner of Player Actions which may be attempted during the game.

* * *

OBTAINING MONEY

Players begin the game with a set amount of money in their Bank Accounts, and may make an initial cash withdrawal from their Accounts before play begins. After that, they must engage in game transactions with other Players and the Exchange Zones in order to affect their financial balances.

* * *

OBTAINING CARDS

Players begin the game with a small number of Cards of various types, (generally from one to three Cards, most of them Rumors). After that, they must engage in game transactions with other Players and the Exchange Zones to obtain or get rid of Cards.

In general, Rumor Cards are worth \$200 whether purchased from another Player or from one of the Exchange Zones (unless they're reputed to be *Intel*, which multiplies their value up to tenfold). Players may sell Rumors to other Players at whatever prices they deem fit, but *The Street* and *The Market* will only pay \$100 for Rumors, regardless of their alleged veracity.

Most of the other "Multiple" Cards -- Rumors, Items, and Programs -- might be available at any given time through the Exchange Zones, depending on the economic activity of the game world. The majority of these Cards have set prices on them for use by the Exchange Zones (Players may set their own prices when dealing with other Players); these Cards may be sold back to the Exchange Zones for 1/2 of their listed value.

* * *

PLAYER-PLAYER TRANSACTIONS

With only a few exceptions, Players are free to engage in any transactions they wish to with other Players. Should one Player feel slighted by another in some transaction they are certainly free to consult an Attorney (PC or NPC) or complain to hir superior; but it is actually expected that some planned act of revenge will be the chief compensatory action in most cases. There are really only two considerations restricting these transactions, both of them matters of social import.

1: Players should attempt to remain "in character" at all times. This consideration extends to both their words and their deeds, as well as to their goals and motivations. In other words, it is not kosher to help someone from an opposing Corp/Org simply because they happen to be your best friend in "real life."

2: Players should remember, regardless of who "wins" and "loses," and regardless of who screws whom in the course of play, that

MEDIATRIX IS A GAME. This means that you should not take game events very seriously; they may or may not have any bearing on the real world -- or even Tod's twisted view of it, for that matter. *However*, this *also* means that the general atmosphere should be good-humored and socially constructive; any Players who are unable to refrain from violent or otherwise disruptive behavior will be removed from the game.

* * *

YEARLY EVENTS

For a few minutes at the end of each hour (year), the focus of game activity shifts temporarily, allowing the Game Staff to track plot elements and perform necessary bookkeeping tasks.

* * *

ANNUAL REPORTS

Five minutes (one month) before the end of each hour (year), Players will receive notice to begin making their yearly reports. This is a very simple matter, for which Annual Report Forms are provided (as well as some staplers and/or paperclips -- see below). Every Player fills out such a Report, writing in hir own name, the names of hir employer(s) and affiliation(s), the amount of cash she currently carries, and the Card Indexes from hir current hand. After this is done, the procedure differs depending on the Player Character's *Class*, as shown below.

FOR CORPORATES AND UNDERGROUNDERS:

The finished Report is then given to the Character's immediate superior, who has been completing hir own Report as well. Once a superior has collected Reports from hir underlings, she staples or paperclips them together with hir own Report on top, and delivers this Report Stack to *hir* superior. This continues (through two or three loops at the most) until the top-level Characters complete *their* Report Stacks, which are handed in to their respective Co-Actor superiors (*The Boss* for heads of Corps, *Sister Mary* for heads of Orgs).

FOR FREEAGENTS:

FreeAgents must complete Annual Reports just like other Player Characters, but they hand their finished Reports directly to the GameMaster (or a nearby GameOp, who takes them to the GM).

* * *

TAXES

After all the Annual Reports have been handed in, the GameMaster will run the *Tax Calculation Macro* on *The Bank* spreadsheet, instantly calculating and assessing taxes for the previous year. There is no way for Players to affect this. Ain't control great?

* * *

SECTION 6: CHARTS AND FORMS

This Section includes a number of Charts detailing various important aspects of the MEDIATRIX world and game-mechanical structure, as well as a copy of every Form used in the game.

CARD TYPES AND COLORS

```

+-----+
| Rumor Cards = Pink |
| Item Cards = Yellow |
| Program Cards = Blue |
| Aces = Green |
+-----+

```

CARD INDEXES AND VALUES

This is the full list of all PlotCards in the game. In the interest of saving space, a few abbreviations are used in the following charts: "C/O" = "<corp/org>," "I/P" = "<item/program>," "IT" = "<item>," and "PC" = "<person>."

```

+-----+
| RUMOR CARDS
|
| Card Text/Jist          Card   Base   How   Notes
|                          Index  Value  Many
|=====|=====|=====|=====|
| C/O's Misdeeds          RB$##  200
| C/O's Good Deeds        RG$##  200
| C/O Meeting With C/O    RM$##  200
| C/O Working on Proj/Action RP$##  200
| PC is Spy for C/O       RS$##  200
| C/O Possesses Ace       R4@$#  200
| C/O Controls C/O        RC$##  200
| PC Controls C/O         RCP$#  200
| C/O On Way Up           RU$##  200
| C/O On Way Down         RD$##  200
| C/O Bank Balance        RM$##  200
| PC Bank Balance         RMP##  200
| C/O Bank Access Code    RX$##  200
| PC Bank Access Code     RXP##  200
| C/O Net Password        RN$##  200
| PC Net Password         RNP##  200
| Dossier on C/O          RF$##  200
| Dossier on PC           RFP##  200
| PC's Misdeeds           RBP##  200
| PC's Good Deeds         RGP##  200
| PC on C/O's Hitlist     RK$##  200
| PC on PC's Hitlist      RKP##  200
| I/P Exists              RI      200
| I/P's Location/Owner    RL      200
| C/O possesses I/P       RO
|
| NOTES: $ and @ are used as initial variable markers:
| $ indicates a Corp/Org initial (G, M, I, R, C or A).
| @ indicates an "Ace" type; the second letter of the Ace's Index.
+-----+

```

ITEM CARDS:

Card Text/Jist	Card Index	Base Value	How Many	Notes
ComSat Uplink	IUU##			
Private ComSat	ITT##			
BioRAM Chip	IRR##			
Shares in GNP	ISG##			
Shares in MegaMedia	ISM##			
Shares in INRI	ISI##			
Shares in Other Corp	IS!##			
False Bank Account	IMM##			
False Net Account	INN##			
False ID	III##			
Sci/Tech Lab	ILL##			
Multimedia Studio	IMM##			
Hot Title	ITT##			
Secure Transport	IVV##			
Secure Communication	ICC##			
Drug Shipment	IDD##			
Nuclear Warhead	INN##			
Aladdin's Lamp *	ISSA1			
The Ark *	ISSA2			
The Crystal Skull *	ISSC1			
The Monkey's Paw *	ISSM1			
The Necronomicon *	ISSN1			

NOTE: ! is used as a second numeric variable marker (besides #).

PROGRAM CARDS:

Card Text/Jist	Card Index	Base Value	How Many	Notes
Password Hacker	PH!##			
Virus	PV!##			
DataHound	PD!##			
Custom OS	PS!##			
Broadband Pirate	PMX##			
AIOS *	PAIS#			

NOTE: ! is used as a second numeric variable marker (besides #).

ACES:				
Card Text/Jist	Card Index	Base Value	How Many	Notes
Mercenaries/Fanatics	AMF##			
Wizard Hacker	AWH##			
Funding Source	AF!##			
PR/Media Attention	APR##			
Recog/Award/Honor	AAH##			
Celebrity Support	ACS##			
Lead to NPC Specialist	AN!##			
Major Supply of Resource	AR!##			
Plant/Deep Agent in GNP	AAG##			
Plant/Deep Agent in MM	AAM##			
Plant/Deep Agent in INRI	AAI##			
Plant/Deep Agent in Redistr.	AAR##			
Plant/Deep Agent in C23	AAC##			
Plant/Deep Agent in Aquariae	AAA##			
Sigil of The Corporation *	AXCX#			
Sigil of The Underground *	AXUX#			

NOTE: ! is used as a second numeric variable marker (besides #).

PLAYER CHARACTER FORM

Name: _____

Profession: _____

Employer (Corp): _____

Affiliation (Org): _____

Clout/Status (1-10): _____ CyberSpace Skill (1-10): _____

Bank Access Code: _____ Starting Balance: _____

Net Password: _____

Initial Motivator: _____

Background: _____

Notes: _____

ANNUAL REPORT FORM

Name: _____

Employer (Corp): _____

Affiliation (Org): _____

Cash Currently on Hand: _____

Card Numbers Currently in Hand:
