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About GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the ***GURPS*** system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources now available include:

Pyramid (**www.sjgames.com/pyramid**). Our online magazine includes new rules and articles for ***GURPS***. It also covers the hobby's top games – ***Advanced Dungeons & Dragons, Traveller, World of Darkness, Call of Cthulhu, Shadowrun,*** and many more – and other Steve Jackson Games releases like ***In Nomine, INWO, Car Wars, Toon, Ogre Miniatures,*** and more. *Pyramid* subscribers also have access to playtest files online, to see (and comment on) new books before release.

New supplements and adventures. ***GURPS*** continues to grow, and we'll be happy to let you know what's new. A current catalog is available for an SASE. Or check out our Web site (below).

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata sheets for all ***GURPS*** releases, including this book, are available from SJ Games; be sure to include an SASE. Or download them from the Web – see below.

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Internet. Visit us on the World Wide Web at **www.sjgames.com** for an online catalog, errata, updates, and much more. We also have Compuserve and AOL conferences. ***GURPS*** has its own Usenet group, too: rec.games.frp.gurps.

GURPSnet. This e-mail list hosts much of the online discussion of ***GURPS***. To join, mail majordomo@io.com with "subscribe GURPSnet-L" in the message body, or point your web browser to **gurpsnet.sjgames.com/**.

The ***GURPS Traveller Starports*** web page is at **www.sjgames.com/gurps/traveller/starports**.

Page References

Any page reference that begins with a B refers to ***GURPS Basic Set,*** *Third Edition Revised;* e.g., p. B144 refers to page 144 of ***Basic Set.*** CI refers to ***Compendium I***, CII to ***Compendium II***, GT to ***Traveller***, *Second Edition*, S to ***Space***, *Third Edition*, T:BC to ***Traveller Behind the Claw***, T:FT to ***Traveller Far Trader***, and VE to ***Vehicles***, *Second Edition*. For a full list of abbreviations, see p. CI181 or the updated list at **www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html**.

Introduction

Starports have been a major part of ***Traveller*** since day one. Like the seaports and airports of earlier eras, they provide a place for starships to replenish expendable stores, to refuel, and to pump out the used atmosphere before it actually gets thick enough to impede walking. Starports provide a starting (and ending) point for most adventures, a convenient place for the powers-that-be to interact/aid/impede the PCs and a place to fence the loot.

In the course of actual roleplaying, the metal and concrete and contragravity forklifts of a starport are less important than the paradigm it represents. Is it a gleaming, high-tech port of entry (doubtless hiding a high-level conspiracy somewhere)? Or a dusty frontier whistlestop (somehow they're always dusty, even in vacuum)? Or a maze of subsurface tunnels within a murderously hostile world, dripping with grease and condensation? The blueprints and the bond issues may drive the construction, and the economic base may determine the level of maintenance, but the paradigm sets the story. We have included paradigms as well as floorplans.

So what else is in this ode to scheduled maintenance and cargo labeling? Well, there's an explanation of why planetary customs officers and Imperial customs officers don't share pizzas, and who puts out a fire on the extrality line, and what "floaters" are. Also: Installing plumbing for non-Human transients (without diagrams – we have to send this thing through the mail). A short course in military seizure of your friendly neighborhood port facility. What hotel room the typical space-traveling grifter prefers . . . and where to get the best beer and burger in charted space. Because it's tough to save the universe on an empty stomach.

– John M. Ford

About the Authors

John M. Ford is a well-known science-fiction author, gamer, and ***Traveller*** fan of many years. John's works include (but are not limited to) *The Dragon Waiting, Fugue State, The Final Reflection, How Much for Just the Planet?* and *Yellow Clearance Black Box Blues.* He lives in Minneapolis, where the fabric of reality has been worn thin in numerous places.

James Maliszewski grew up in Baltimore, MD, where he learned to love the Orioles, to hate the Yankees, and to spend far too much time in one of several fantasy worlds. When he grew up (or so it is rumored), he became a grad student in philosophy at the University of Toronto. While he hasn't yet picked up a doctorate for his troubles, he has acquired a wife, a child, and some small success as a writer for the roleplaying and computer games industry. He currently lives in Scarborough, Ontario, Canada.

About the Line Editor

Loren Wiseman was one of the founding partners of GDW, Inc., original publishers of ***Traveller,*** and spent more than 20 years there as a game designer, developer, typesetter, and editor. After GDW closed, Loren freelanced for a time, and then came to SJ Games, where he is ***Traveller*** line editor and expert-in-residence.

Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society

The long-running ***Traveller*** magazine is now online at **www.sjgames.com/jtas/**, edited by Loren Wiseman. It supports all versions of ***Traveller*** with news, articles, discussion areas, and reviews. Subscriptions are $15/year for 52 weekly updates and full access to archives.

The *Traveller News Service* is updated weekly, chronicling the life and times of the Imperium, and is viewable *free* at **www.sjgames.com/gurps/traveller/news.html**.

The SJ Games ***Traveller*** page (**www.sjgames.com/traveller/**) links to the ***Traveller*** Web Ring, which includes most of the major ***Traveller***-oriented websites. For information on subscribing to the ***Traveller*** mailing list, contact traveller-owner@mpgn.com.

The SPA Emblem

The Starport Authority emblem can be found on all official SPA stationery, buildings, vehicles, and uniforms.

The emblem consists of a large terrestrial world on which is placed the cartographic symbol for a starport: a device resembling crosshairs made up of a circle and a pair of crossed lines. Encircling the planet is a stylized starship with a thruster trail to indicate that it is launching.

This emblem has been in continuous use since the SPA was founded by Imperial decree in 422.

Childhood Memories

"I doubt that anyone forgets their first visit to a starport. It's usually a magical event: strange people rushing to and fro, new scents everywhere, cargo containers on lifts, blaring announcements, and starships – so many starships. There's no better way to get a sense of the immensity and diversity of space than to watch the starships at a port.

"I was always impressed by the Vargr merchant ships that I saw come to the station. I guess that's why I spent some time traveling in the Extents as a youth, even though my father never approved of my choice. Yet, I think it gave me some perspective that has served me well since then.

"My recommendation to anyone thinking of entering the service of the Imperium is quite simple: Spend some time at a starport. Trust me, you'll learn more in a few hours of observation there than you could in years of formal study. You'll see why this Imperium we have is a thing worth saving, a thing worth protecting. Nothing, nothing can be allowed to threaten that."

– from an interview with Archduke Brzk, conducted by the Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society, 156-1119.

Worlds cannot interfere *at all* with goods transshipping (i.e., just passing through) their Imperial starport. In an important extension of extrality, the goods never legally leave Imperial territory.

Host planets can impose uniform tariffs on goods destined for their world, and most do, ranging from 0% to more than 200% of market value (see p. T:FT13). The SPA monitors these tariffs, and takes an aggressive stance in adjudicating them. A world with an Imperial starport will be wasting its time in attempting to impose a special tariff on a product for which one of its rivals is a leading exporter – no matter how legitimate the grounds for the tariff. The *appearance* of Imperial fairness usually outweighs all other considerations.

This longstanding devotion to fair trade helped to sell thousands of worlds on the SPA system, and through it, on the Imperium itself. Despite any complaining, it still does. Many steadfast member worlds would not display nearly as much devotion without the immense, tangible benefits of hosting an Imperial starport. (This rarely protects the starport from being the target of displeasure at other Imperial policies, though.)

Therefore, a starport provides the Imperium a method by which to offer consistent commercial-starship service, regulate star-travel for safety, set trade policy, monitor local compliance with said policy, and levy taxes. Weighed against these many advantages are the extremely high cost of the port and its personnel.

SPA Starports

Over 97% of the starports within the Imperium and over 40% of those found on nearby non-member worlds are Imperial ports. The Starport Authority grades all of its facilities as falling into one of five classes. (For convenience, the Travellers' Aid Society applies the same grading to non-SPA starports when describing their service levels.)

This section expands on the evolution of ports from Class I to Class V. More complete details of port features appear in Chapter 5, *Starship Design*.

Class I

The Imperium usually creates a Class I starport by landing two modular cutters. One carries earth-moving and surfacing equipment, and a work crew. It clears and levels space for several small starships to set down, with at least one area large enough for a starship of up to about 1,000 displacement tons to put down without undue risk. If the Starport Authority has deemed it necessary, the crew will also string metal fencing around the port, defining an extrality line. The other cutter carries an office module (see p. 103), which becomes the new port's headquarters building – in most cases, its *only* building. Often the office module – and any staff – are omitted.

The office (if present) operates the landing lights and approach beacon, handles the standard paperwork on transient vessels, stores cargo of Imperial concern (mail, mostly), and provides a place for passengers to wait out of the rain or vacuum.

There are no facilities for fueling or routine servicing of ships. If convenient, the port will be located near a body of water from which properly equipped vessels may draw unrefined fuel. Some emergency parts and supplies are stocked. If there have been several emergency touchdowns recently, the supply may be depleted. This means the crew will simply have to send a message (provided another ship is outbound to carry the message) and wait for the supply ship.

The basic P/I has no surfaced or covered berths or hangars; some examples must temporarily shut down operations after a hard rain. Local residents may lease long-term berthing space, but must prepare and maintain any improvements themselves.

There are no retail stores or food service, though the general manager (the person staffing the office) may share his coffee. Directions will be provided to the nearest habitation, along with advice on local customs, law levels, and anything else likely to get the visitor in trouble.

Floaters: The Shadow Shift

All major ports have a floating population that lives, but does not work, on the property. As a group they will largely be local citizens with a sprinkling of starfaring refugees, and for that reason they're considered a local-relations concern.

These people live by handouts, eating leftovers from the restaurants (or scavenging the garbage), and sometimes petty theft. SPA does not mention these people publicly, unless an incident forces the PR office to make some kind of statement. In internal documents, they are referred to as Unattached Transients. The common term is "floaters."

Periodically a director (usually a new one) will order a "floater sweep." Security is mobilized to hunt through the port, rounding up all the floaters they can find. Sweeps are disruptive, but rarely violent – most floaters hide if possible but give up quietly if caught. Those picked up are ID'd – planetary residents are passed over the XT line, to the local authority if any; Imperial citizens from other worlds are handed to a social-service agency, though this may involve several weeks of detention until a transfer vessel arrives.

A sweep will catch from one-third to two-thirds of the total population before the disruption is no longer worth the return. The remainder lie low for a while, but they will soon return to their routine (the reduced competition for resources making life a little easier). Within two to three years, the numbers will be back to their pre-sweep levels.

Many floaters of local origin slipped into the port to escape their society, because of repression, intolerance, or just failure to "fit in." Some are refugees from war, disaster, or authoritarian governments. Others are ship's crew, unable to find work or no longer fit for it. Between 5% and 10% are combat veterans – more in the immediate wake of a war. Unreliable estimates (the only sort available) suggest that about half have some kind of mental instability.

From time to time someone finds a floater dead, from starvation, disease, or accident. Usually the body is discovered by Security or engineering; sometimes a passenger finds it, and the PR officer gets to make a statement.

Though all ports have rules against assisting floaters, they are sometimes fed by commissary or other employees, and many Medical personnel consider off-the-books treatment to be much less costly than having roving sources of infectious disease (leaving any moral issues aside).

Continued on next page . . .

Port directors find it in their best interests to treat environmentalists with care. While every effort is made to make the starport as safe and hazard-free as possible, there is always the potential for mistakes. Wildlife habitats can be disrupted, especially in the case of flying animals that might be adversely affected by landing starships. Similarly, fuel and other substances can be spilled, producing a hazard for everyone living near the port. In the interests of public relations, most port directors put on at least the appearance of concern about the issues raised by environmental groups.

Business and Union Leaders

Another common source of concern is planetary business and union leaders, worried about the impact the starport will have on the local economy. Though most port directors seek to maximize local employment, on some worlds the nature of the local economy might be precarious enough that the Imperial starport still could be viewed as "stealing jobs" away from the locals.

Nothing could be further from the truth in most cases. Even so, port directors and the public relations office commonly deal with perceived rather than actual concerns from locals. Unless a director is willing to generate bad public relations, he will do what he can to alleviate these concerns regardless of their merits.

This is a primary reason that the line and public relations offices hold public lectures and educational series. The more the locals know about how a starport integrates their world into the Imperial economy, the less likely they are to perceive it as something "alien" and harmful to the local economy. SPA encourages locals to view the local starport as "theirs," although it is legally an Imperial possession. Starports are a typical site of elementary-school trips. Indeed, childhood experiences on a trip like this are the origin of many careers in the SPA.

These endeavors on the part of the line and public relations offices do not always work, but they go a long way toward making a port director's life easier.

Annoyances and Trouble-Makers

In some cases, there is nothing the SPA administration can do to satisfy an intransigent local. There will always be individuals (or groups) that feel somehow aggrieved or otherwise put upon. A common example is people who live close to a starport and are therefore bothered by the noise level. Every legitimate effort is made to accommodate these grievances. However, a certain amount of noise cannot be abated. Consequently, the port director and the line office must be prepared to deal with the results of their own limitations.

Concerns about noise are actually legitimate, if unavoidable, problems. Most public relations offices would be happy to deal with such problems, when compared to the true fringe of people with unusual problems. One need only recall the tale of a farmer on Emerald (Jewell/Spinward Marches) who believed that even the limited traffic to that world's Class IV starport upset his groats to such an extent that they would not mate, thereby endangering the future of his whole herd. There is also the story of the war veteran on Sarar (Sarar/Antares) who claimed that he could pick up control tower transmissions through his prosthetic limbs.

If asked, most port directors could regale you with dozens of stories like these. In almost every case, nothing could be done to deal with the problem, if indeed it was a genuine problem at all. Starports will, inevitably, inconvenience someone. It is the duty of the director and the line office to make certain that these people do not, in turn, inconvenience the port itself.

Startown

This is the generic name for an area – usually just outside the XT line – occupied by cheap hotels, grimy taverns, and even less savory places, serving the people who are not quite part of either the local community or the port, but associate with both: unemployed star crew and their employed brethren on leave, port laborers hoping for work, petty thieves and con men who work the port when they can get away with it, businesses that can't operate openly, etc.