

FILES FROM THE
“VERYLOST”
DIRECTORY OF THE

CLASSIC TEXT ADVENTURE
MASTERPIECES

INFOCOM®

ACTIVISION®

Have you ever sneaked into someone's room, read their diary, and then left without a trace?

That is sort of what this folder is. It contains a series of files downloaded from the old Infocom UNIX server, which made it to Los Angeles but didn't quite make it to our new, spiffy, world-wide headquarters.

Mail messages, in particular, provide a glimpse into what was happening at Infocom at the time, and also some thoughts on Activision's acquisition of Infocom.

The politicking would have made many people proud. There probably could have been an adventure game just in getting a title produced back in those days.

The Infodope folder contains three issues of Infodope, INFOCOM's in-house newsletter. The Misc folder contains a great piece about writing Infocom fiction called The Implementor's Creed, notes on Infocom's favorite pastime, and notes from a Studio offsite meeting held by Infocom. The Aborted folder contains notes about several serious and not-serious ideas for games pitched around by the Infocom team.

Digging through this disc reminded me of leafing through old newspapers in your grandmother's attic. You know the kind where they are advertising a 1932 Ford coupe in cherry condition for only \$600? I felt like I had been born too many years too late to enjoy the best times of the game industry. Even though I played all of Infocom's text adventures on my Atari 800, I couldn't help but wish I actually created those games. I hope that everyone who plays these games will enjoy them as much as I enjoyed putting together this collection.

Jason Kay
Activision Black Operations Team
June 1996

From the Computer of G. Kevin Wilson
SPAG Magazine, Editor and Infocommie
June 19th, 1996.

I'm sure that many of you are old-time infocommies. I myself got started on Infocom games (Wishbringer, to be exact), many years ago, when I got my first IBM PC XT.

I guess some of you are wondering why I enjoy text adventures, and why I'm still interested in them in this age of 3-D shooters, ray-traced adventures, and 16-bit sound, it's simple...you can't beat a good story. If those games would start with a great story and build everything else around that, they'd be brilliant. Most don't. With a text adventure, there was nothing else to support the game, you had to have a good story, or things fell apart. Now, Infocom wasn't always on the mark, but they hit it pretty consistently, and when they hit it dead center, the results were unforgettable. That's why you still hear grown adults babbling about 'Hucka-Bucka-Beanstalk' and 'that \$%#&*\$(!) babel fish!'

I doubt that many of you have heard of SPAG magazine. It's not available in a printed format, only over the Internet. It's a magazine about text adventures, but it's not just about the old text adventures. SPAG magazine has for the past two years been following the efforts of hobbyists and college students around the world to keep text adventures alive.

SPAG consists almost exclusively of reader-submitted reviews. The readers play text adventures, and then share their opinions of them with the rest of us. You are invited to submit reviews as well. There is more information about SPAG in the file SPAG.FAQ, a Frequently-Asked-Questions file that I maintain so I don't have to answer lots of questions over and over.

By the way, if you have Internet access with FTP capability, you're in luck. There's a lot of material out there to help you write text adventures of your very own. There's even a newsgroup expressly for authors of text adventures to discuss tips and tricks. It is: rec.arts.int-fiction (The int-fiction stands for "interactive fiction", a phrase used by Infocom to describe the games they produced.)

The FTP site you'll want to visit is: <ftp.gmd.de>

Look in the /if-archive/ directory. You will find hundreds of text adventures, solutions, and text adventure design kits. If you look in the /if-archive/magazines/SPAG/ directory, you'll find all the issues of SPAG magazine available freely.

If you look in the /if-archive/info/ directory, you'll see several guides to help you with the less technical and more literary aspects of making a good game. I myself wrote "Whizzard's Guide to Authoring Text Adventures." Clunky title, I know, but I think I got my major points across in it.

And hey, after you've played around and written your own text adventure, why not try to enter it in the Annual Interactive Fiction Competition. The file CONTEST1.TXT describes last year's rules, prizes, and the outcome of the contest. INTRVIEW.TXT includes some e-mail interviews with the game authors that I conducted for SPAG. Most important to the prospective author though, is CONTEST2.TXT. This file details the 1996 Competition, with mostly up to date rules, and prizes. If you are interested, you should watch rec.arts.int-fiction for further developments, and get busy on those game ideas of yours. The final deadline is Sept. 31, 1996. But even if you miss this year's competition, don't fret, it's "Annual", after all.

Good luck playing these great games, and maybe someday we'll get together for a game of Hider-and-Seeker.

G. Kevin Wilson
"Whizzard"
whizzard@uclink.berkeley.edu

Date: 10 Sep 1985 1125-EDT
From: Stu Galley <SWG at ZORK>
Subject: stuff for Binky
To:imps at ZORK

After our talk with O'Leary at last week's lunch, I wrote the following, which I think expresses my view of what we do and how we do it.

I don't know whether this will make him any happier, but I'd like to give you a chance to comment before I show it to him.

THE IMPLEMENTOR'S CREED

I create fictional worlds. I create experiences.

I am exploring a new medium for telling stories.

My readers should become immersed in the story and forget where they are. They should forget about the keyboard and the screen, forget everything but the experience. My goal is to make the computer invisible.

I want as many people as possible to share these experiences. I want a broad range of fictional worlds, and a broad range of "reading levels". I can categorize our past works and discover where the range needs filling in. I should also seek to expand the categories to reach every popular taste.

In each of my works, I share a vision with the reader. Only I know exactly what the vision is, so only I can make the final decisions about content and style. But I must seriously consider comments and suggestions from any source, in the hope that they will make the sharing better.

I know what an artist means by saying, "I hope I can finish this work before I ruin it." Each work-in-progress reaches a point of diminishing returns, where any change is as likely to make it worse as to make it better. My goal is to nurture each work to that point. And to make my best estimate of when it will reach that point.

I can't create quality work by myself. I rely on other implementors to help me both with technical wizardry and with overcoming the limitations of the medium. I rely on testers to tell me both how to communicate my vision better and where the rough edges of the work need polishing. I rely on marketers and salespeople to help me share my vision with more readers. I rely on others to handle administrative details so I can concentrate on the vision.

None of my goals is easy. But all are worth hard work. Let no one doubt my dedication to my art.

THE CREATION

Infocom interactive fiction - a very old story
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Release 42 / Serial number 271828

Void

All is unformed and void; and darkness is upon the face of the deep.

>VERSION

This is the Authorized Version of King James.

>TIME

It is the beginning.

>WHO AM I

You are that you are.

>EXAMINE DARKNESS

You can't see the darkness without a light!

>LET THERE BE LIGHT

Okay, there is light.

>EXAMINE THE LIGHT

It is good.

>DIVIDE THE LIGHT FROM THE DARKNESS

It is so.

>CALL THE LIGHT "DAY" THEN CALL THE DARKNESS "NIGHT"

Called.

Called.

>EXAMINE NIGHT AND DAY

night: There is evening.

day: There is morning.

>TIME

It is the first day.

>LET THERE BE A FIRMAMENT

Okay, there is a firmament.

>FIRMAMENT, DIVIDE THE WATERS FROM THE WATERS

[Which waters do you mean, the lower waters or the upper waters?]

(continued)

>LOWER
[Which waters do you mean, the lower waters or the upper waters?]

>UPPER
It is so.

>CALL THE FIRMAMENT "HEAVEN"
Called.

>TIME
It is the second day.

>GATHER TOGETHER THE LOWER WATERS UNTO ONE PLACE
Gathered.

>LET THERE BE DRY LAND
It is so.

>CALL THE DRY LAND "EARTH" THEN CALL THE GATHERED WATERS "SEAS"
Called.
Called.

>EXAMINE ALL
It is good.

>EARTH, BRING FORTH GRASS AND HERB AND FRUIT TREE
grass: It is so.
herb: It is so.
fruit tree: It is so.

>EXAMINE ALL
It is good.

>TIME
It is the third day.

>MAKE TWO GREAT LIGHTS
Made.

>GREATER LIGHT, RULE THE DAY
Ruled.

>LESSER LIGHT, RULE THE NIGHT
Ruled.

>MAKE THE STARS ALSO
Made.

>SET BOTH LIGHTS IN THE FIRMAMENT
Set.

(continued)

>EXAMINE ALL

It is good.

>TIME

It is the fourth day.

>CREATE GREAT WHALES, AND ALL LIVING CREATURES IN THE WATERS, AND ALL WINGED FOWL

whales: Made.

goldfish: Made.

sea horses: Made.

...

rocs: Made.

emus: Made.

>EXAMINE ALL

It is good.

>CREATURES, BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY AND FILL THE WATERS IN THE SEAS

"Okay."

>TIME

It is the fifth day.

>MAKE THE BEAST OF THE EARTH AND CATTLE AND ALL CREEPING THINGS

beast: Made.

cattle: Made.

zebras: Made.

yaks: Made.

platypuses: Made.

...

cockroaches: Made.

>EXAMINE ALL

It is good.

>CREATE MAN AND WOMAN IN MY OWN IMAGE

man: Made.

woman: Made.

>BLESS THEM

Blessed.

>THEM, BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY AND REPLENISH THE EARTH AND SUBDUE IT

"No problem."

>THEM, HAVE DOMINION OVER THE FISH AND THE FOWL AND ALL LIVING THINGS

"You got it."

(continued)

>EXAMINE ALL
Behold, it is very good.

>TIME
It is the sixth day.

>REST
Time passes...

>TIME
It is the seventh day.

>BLESS THE SEVENTH DAY
Blessed.

>SANCTIFY IT
[Be specific: what object do you want to sanctify?]

>THE SEVENTH DAY
Sanctified.

>QUIT

Your score is 350 (total of 350 points), in 47 moves.
This gives you the rank of God.
Do you wish to leave the game? (Y is affirmative): >Y

The following GNU NEWS appeared on page 5 of the Fall 1985 issue of "The New York Times" (Volume IV, Number 4). However, only the first three gnu facts were published, due to space considerations.

GNU NEWS

Sirs,

Many people say that yaks have no sense of humor. This is untrue. Yaks have a highly sophisticated sense of humor, as the yak joke below proves. Gnus have no sense of humor.

{Grunt. Grunt grunt grunt. Sniff! (Paw, paw, paw.) Grunt?
(pause)
Grunt sniff!}

Signed, YAK X

This letter from a disgruntled reader has prompted the N.Z.T. editorial staff to launch a serious investigation of its own attitudes and prejudices toward yaks, resulting in a 105-page white paper that is now required reading for all staff writers.

But even this is not enough. Disgruntled readers demand that the sins of the past be rectified.

(Gruntled readers demand nothing, as usual.) So, in the spirit of equal treatment for all bovine species, the N.Z. T. now begins a series of public-service messages designed to enlighten its readership on the subject of gnus.

Did you gknow...

- that the gnu is an African antelope, bulky but compact?
- that "gnu" comes from the Bushman word "nqu"?
- that Dutch settlers in Africa called the gnu a "wildebeest"?
- that the white-tailed gnu, or black wildebeest [*Connochaetes gnou*] is xtinct in the wild?
- that the brindled gnu, or blue wildebeest [*C. taurinus*], is abundant on African grasslands, forming migrating herds of a million individuals or more?
- that both sexes of gnus grow horns?
- that grazing gnus are often bothered by gnats?
- that gnu studying geology often confuse gneiss with schist?
- that gnu require large quantities of water and have been gknown to eat ice during the cold season, if they can get it?
- that a herd of gnus can migrate less than seven thousand miles in a single day?
- that a gnu's only defense against predators is running away? (Gnarled old gnus tell an old gnu story about one that tried (and failed) to scare off a big cat by gnashing its teeth and gnawing its gknees.)
- that a newborn gnu can stand up only five minutes after birth, follow its mother after ten minutes, and run as fast as an adult after 24 hours?
- that gnus in flight toss their heads, prance, and throw up their heels?
- that baby gnus learn to fly only when the parents push them out of the gnest?
- that a gnu can tell time by observing the shadow of its raised tail, which is gknown as a gnomon?
- that gnus, although gnative to Africa, sometimes wander as far gnorth as Zurich, where they are gknown as gnomes?
- that a popular African rock group is gknown as Ghuey Glewis and the Gnus?
- that a gnu was almost elected to the Toledo, Ohio, city council? (It lost in a recount.)
- that a group of religious fanatics in Tibet believes that St. Botolph has been re-incarnated as a gnu on a local farm?

InfoDope

Infocom's in-house humor newsletter

Issue #1:

Tuesday Imp lunches are generally a time of light-hearted talk over nectar and ambrosia. Last week, talk turned tough as the Imps, in their monthly union meeting took a strike vote against Infocom. Union rep Steve Meretzky read a prepared statement to the press explaining the Imps Union disgruntlement with management over such issues as free agency, overtime, benefits, and bagels.

The striking Imps set up picket lines outside 125 CambridgePark Drive carrying signs proclaiming "Info Unfair!" and "More Bagels, More Freedom!" Picket lines by sympathetic Teamsters were set up in Cresskill, NJ, Mountain View, CA, Menlo Park, CA, and Upper Sandusky, OH (just for the hell of it). Back in Cambridge, Infocom's Micro Systems Group and Testing Department refused to cross the picket line in a show of solidarity with the Imps.

Chris Reeve, InfoVice Pres of Development explained that management has been trying to get the Imps to the bargaining table for months, but they refused to come. Dave Lebling, an Imp Union leader, hearing this, exclaimed, "He's full of grueshit. Trying to talk with management is like a bad wizard trying to nitfol. It just doesn't happen. They've been stubborn for months and haven't once even approached anything vaguely resembling a bargaining table."

Mike Dornbrook, InfoMarketing Director, the most vocal of management explained later that Beyond Zork, Border Zone, Sherlock, Infocomics, and a host of other games are in danger. But management has a plan should the Imps stage a long strike.

"Bring on the NURDs!" shouted Gabrielle Accardi, InfoSales Development Manager. NURDs are Non Union Replacement Designers that management plans to employ on a per game basis if the Imps stay on strike. Management plans to bring in the NURDs through the steam tunnels from 150 CambridgePark Drive,, thereby avoiding a possible confrontation with the Imps. Plans are also set to release "replacement games" for those that are endangered by the strike.

"Beyond Bork" would be the tale of a misguided judge, written by Robert Bork, who was a tester at Infocom, but when he couldn't get a job as an Imp, quit and went on to Yale Law School. "Sort of Groan" is a game about East-West Summit meeting in the late 1980's that will be written by Frank Blank, a distant cousin of Marc Blank, the designer of "Border Zone."

Unconfirmed rumors also exist that InfoManagement has contacted Michael Bywater as a potential NURD.

In a flagrant violation of company policy and good taste, the Imps have booby-trapped the 20 with all sorts of witty sayings to disrupt the flow of replacement games, but thus far there has been no violence.

Issue #2:

Triton: A Scandal Waiting To Happen???

As Activision moves ahead with its plans to purchase Triton, the future could look mighty bleak. Triton is a well-known and well-respected mail order house, currently carrying Activision products amongst its extensive product line. The purchase of Triton is intended to strengthen Activision's Direct

Sales and to unify Activision's and Infocom's Direct Mail programs. However, stormy weather may be on the horizon.

A member of InfoDope's crack investigative team, penetrated the iron-clad human resources department at Triton, and managed to get hired. Once inside, he sniffed around a lot and nosed his way into things nobody was to know, all-the-while appearing to toe the line. As expected, his reports show that Triton is but a front for a drug and stolen merchandise ring.

Apparently, orders placed on a special 800 number had nothing to do with software. When a "customer" ordered GHOSTBUSTERS on this number, he would be shipped a half gram of heroin and could charge the \$100 price to his Visa or Mastercard. Likewise, MINDSHADOW orders were filled with Mescaline, ALTER EGO with Hashish oil, SPINDIZZY with Valium, TASS TIMES IN TONE-TOWN with Barbiturates, and ZOIDS with LSD. TOP FUEL ELIMINATOR seems to be one of many codes for ordering cocaine. The most expensive item on this special order form was HOWARD THE DUCK at \$35,000 for a kilo of white powder.

Drug accessories are also sold through Triton. GARRY KITCHEN'S GAMEMAKER KIT is actually a crack laboratory in a box. I AM THE C128 customers receive a collection of drug paraphernalia, including a bong, a coke bullet, and a computer shaped roach clip.

Gamestar products sold through Triton are actually stolen jewelry, and it is still unconfirmed that Infocom boxes shipped from Triton contain counterfeit currency.

Triton apparently uses Activision employees to pick up some of the merchandise when they are "on vacation" in such tourist hotspots as Peru, Ecuador, and Brazil.

The big question, of course, is Does Activision know. Activision honcho Bruce Davis was unavailable for comment. Newly hired Director of Direct Marketing, Luigi "Big Looie" Clamari, was quite broken up at hearing the news, sniffing loudly, obviously in tears, during a brief telephone conversation.

Issue #3:

National Football League players, Chicago teachers, and Boston school bus drivers have just been joined on the picket line by strikers from a different quarter. Infocom, Inc. has announced that the development department, affectionately known as the "imps," has taken a vote to join the Teamsters (Local 42) and has gone out on strike effective immediately.

The striking imps are demanding higher wages, more bagel days, a shorter work week, free agency, better benefits, royalties, and no Friday Party duty. Management has been tough on the imps' demands, looking at bagels as the only point where they might give in.

Welcome to the Info-Roto-League-O!

First, the most important fact: draft day is Saturday, April 15, beginning precisely at 11:00 AM (or thereabouts). Plan on an all day (and probably into the evening) event, here at the beautiful headquarters of the world famous game cartel, Infocom.

Enclosed is the following information:

- Rotisserie League Stats from 1988
- Roster of available players and positions (hopefully)
- A copy of the (simplified) rules
- Copy of the Opening day injury list (you may draft from it)
- Copy of USA Today's quick team previews

A few more salient facts:

The roster budget is \$26. That means you have \$26 to spend on 23 players, as follows:

- 5 outfielders
- 1 second baseman
- 1 shortstop
- 1 middle infielder (shortstop or second baseman)
- 1 third baseman
- 1 first baseman
- 1 corner man (first or third baseman)
- 1 designated hitter
- 9 pitchers

No money is needed on draft day. All money gets collected after the season, and the various people get paid off. Also, a small surcharge (\$5?) will probably be added, as we are getting our statistics from USA Today computer. Figure on a cost of about \$30-50 (if you don't win of course!). The player who comes in first gets 50% of the pot, second place gets 25%, third place 15%, and fourth get 10%. All prices in the handout and in the books in the Bibliography should be divided by 10, to get our prices.

The Current Commissioner-for-Life for the Info-Roto-League-O is Tim Anderson. Any and all rule decisions, suspensions, and general police actions will be handle by him. I, Jon Arnold, am your Data General. I will keep statistics and other such mundane and incredibly boring details as handy as I can.

Okay, let's have some fun out there!

Jonathan Arnold

Bibliography:

Rotisserie League Baseball - The Official Rulebook and Complete Guide to Player Values, by Glen Waggoner and Robert Sklar, Bantam Books \$7.95. A must have; contains the official rules (no kidding) as well as invaluable player ratings, strategies and history.

Patton's 1989 Fantasy Baseball Price Guide, by Alex Patton, Simon & Schuster (Fireside), \$8.95. Slight misnamed (really gives what he feels players were worth last year), but contains many insights into players and strategies.

The Fantasy Baseball Abstract, by Wayne M. Welch, Perigee Books, \$8.95. Rates players from zero to

5 stars, looks at the teams, and covers plenty of Rotisserie strategy.

The Sporting News Official Baseball Register, Ed. Barry Siegel, The Sporting News, \$10.95. Complete register and statistics of everyone on a major league roster. Invaluable for deciding on that little known phenom from Arkansas.

Magazines:

Baseball America's Baseball '89 - Baseball America, a baseball biweekly newsletter, is the acknowledged expert on the minor leagues. Much useful discussion on young players. Two articles for Fantasy League owners (that's you!)

Street & Smith's Baseball - Team, season, and minor league reviews. All the stats.

The Sporting News 1989 Baseball Yearbook - Team reviews, stats.

Bill Mazerowski's Baseball '89 - Complete team reviews, fun reading and the best minor league coverage. Also, 1 good article on Fantasy League drafting.

OFFSITE MEETING, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29, 1987.

by pdl. (opinions and attributions are my own)

Attendees: Joel, Chris, Mike, Gabby, Jon, Dave L., Steve, Brian

Jon's "agenda":

SOME POSSIBLE TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

- Where is the market going? (Where has it gone?)
- How many eggs in the I.F. basket?
- What do we do about I.F.?
 - Change collaborator philosophy? ("Name" authors? Licenses?)
 - Outside developers vs. inside developers
 - Genres we haven't tapped into?
 - Any other technological enhancements we should be doing?
 - Proper mix of small changes, big changes, no changes
- Non-I.F.
 - Do we do non-I.F. in-house or outside?
 - How do we go about judging outside possibilities?

--Categories--

We started by discussing the categories entertainment software falls into, with side-trips into such questions as "Is Portal interactive fiction?" The categories were:

- Arcade games (Pacman, Airheart, etc.)
- Role-playing games (Rogue, Wizardry, etc.)
- Sports games (Mean 18, Championship Football, etc.)
- Simulations (Flight Simulator, Gato, etc.)
- Strategy games (Ogre, Eastern Front, etc.)
- Board games (Shanghai, Fooblitzky, etc.)
- Interactive fiction (our stuff, etc.)
- Miscellaneous (Little Computer People, etc.)

Needless to say, there is a lot of fuzziness here. Is Arctic Fox a Simulation, an Arcade game, or a Strategy game? Is Portal I.F.? Is Time Bandits an Arcade game, or I.F., or what?

There was fairly general agreement that these categories have pretty much been with us since the beginning, and that what happens is that every few years, one of them gets "revitalized" and is the leading category for a while. There was also pretty general agreement that it is usually technology that does the revitalizing (either hardware or software). Lately, it seems that graphics is the technology that's doing it.

There was a great deal of discussion about defining what it is we do. For example, do we just do I.F.? Do we do anything that has an English parser in it? Do we have to have puzzles? Do we have to have stories? If you do a point-and-click interface (like Deja Vu) is it still "what we do"?

The most popular formulation seemed to be that we do "Interactive Storytelling," which was fuzzy enough that it could hold a lot of different kinds of products, but understandable enough that anyone out in the world could figure it out.

This has implications for what kinds of products we might do, and what submissions we immediately return.

We beat the subject of Portal into the ground. Brian and I contended that it isn't I.F. (in fact, it's barely interactive), just a "novel" way of presenting a fairly traditional story. Some (Jon?) disagreed.

--Technology--

Some people in the market seem to believe that I.F. technology, particularly ours, hasn't advanced in years. They don't notice the small improvements in the parser and substrate, probably because to a casual observer, our newest games look a lot like our first ones.

[Apparently, Personal Computing is doing a piece on new stuff, and said they weren't including anything of ours (when asked) because it's "old hat."]

Some ideas for changing this opinion:

- * Graphics title screens.
- * "Illuminated" text adventures (as XZIP will permit).
- * Sound.
- * Friendlier parser (knows about common "first-time" mistakes).
- * Better demos (a demo mode, or a demo with speech recognition and speech synthesis for output).

There was a fair amount of discussion about whether it is worth doing any kind of graphics unless it is "the best." Is it worthwhile merely equaling the level of graphics in The Pawn? I think the consensus was that doing good graphics (such as an "illuminated" adventure with Pawn-quality graphics) was better than doing nothing.

A friendlier parser that might make it possible to learn how to play without reading the manual was proposed. It was pointed out that we do this already (to some extent) in games such as Seastalker and Wishbringer. Might be nice to do even better, though.

The consensus was that these things should not all be introduced at once (waiting until they've all been designed and implemented), but rather one thing at a time, whenever we have a game that wants to use them. Of course, given our manpower shortage, we can hardly do it any other way.

[I made a pitch for a more-unlimited game system, possibly based on MU instead of ZIP. Brian is already running out of table space in his game, Amy's game is too big and no even in Beta yet, all our EZIP games have had to be cut, and Bureaucracy had to become EZIP instead of LZIP.]

--The Market--

There was a lot of discussion of what the market is. Do we think there is any realistic chance of doing "mass-market" stuff? Reading and typing make us a minority taste immediately. What if you don't have to read and/or type? Can you do a good I.F. game with a point-and-click interface? Deja Vu has one approach, Labyrinth another.

What makes our games enjoyable? Lots of different things were mentioned: Puzzles, story, humor, exploration, etc.

I proposed that a major thing is satisfying one's curiosity. Seeing new responses, getting the exciting response when you solve a puzzle, etc.

--New Hardware--

There is a Nintendo game machine out there that has 256K of RAM and uses 256K ROM cartridges. On the other hand, it doesn't have a keyboard. On the other other hand, they've sold a fair number, and it might be good practice for the CDI machines.

The CDI machine introduction date has slipped to Jan '89 (at CES). CDI doesn't have a keyboard either.

Can you do a good point-and-click story game? Brian thinks so, but is vague on the specifics. The Tom Snyder cartoon game and some game-like audio things proposed for CDI may give some clues.

Mike would love to see something with voice recognition in it, for all three people in that market. On the other hand, something like that might make a good demo.

--Pricing--

Mike expressed the opinion that lowering prices doesn't increase sales all that much. He even suggested that we ought to consider a \$50 price, as that wouldn't reduce sales much. We've sold about 7000 of the \$15 games through Call Center, which certainly isn't bad, but...

Our dealers and distributors are confused by the various price changes.

--Collaborating--

We used to say we'd only do "real collaborations," where the other party did significant work, and not licenses. Is this still true? Bureaucracy violated it (not by choice), we can't be sure how much work Clavell will do on Shogun, and who knows what will happen with Restaurant?

Mike contended that one purpose of getting big names (Stephen King was used sort of generically here) is to get buyers who are interested in that name enough to follow it. Some fraction of these people will be interested enough to try other games, even if the name they are fans of isn't involved. Obviously, some names will be better for this purpose than others. Stephen King has been hurt because so many adaptations of his work have been bad. Other people, such as Vanna White (another generic name) wouldn't be perceived as contributing much, even by their fans, and are too ephemeral anyway. There seemed to be some sentiment that with a big name, the product could be an original rather than an adaptation (Bureaucracy vs. Hitchhikers?).

There was a fair amount of excitement (from Brian, for one) about "collaborating" with an illustrator, such as Edward Gorey or even Doctor Seuss.

There was also some sentiment that we should pursue certain potential collaborators, rather than hoping they'd come to us. No names were mentioned, however, and the usual caveat about having an interested imp was caveated.

--Genres--

We talked about genres we haven't done. The usual ones came up again: Best-sellers, Historicals, Thrillers, XXX-rated, etc. The usual mumblings about mysteries were mumbled.

One new one came up, which was Jokes. (A side-trip was made into about a zillion horrific dead-baby jokes, elephant jokes, "Mommy, Mommy" jokes, etc.) The idea was that you could do what Jeff is doing in Wordplay, but go even further, and essentially have a collection of jokes and riddles.

--Submissions--

How do we feel about submissions these days? Joel is not worried about being sued if we develop a game that someone thinks is a ripoff of a submission. (Actually, it's Smith McKeithen who isn't worried). It was suggested that Jon have anyone he gives an outside submission to initial it, so we know who's seen it. Submissions that are well developed would be given more consideration than mere "ideas."

Once we are working entirely on micros we can license our development system to outside developers (like EA does).

--Product Mix--

It was proposed (sort of as a confirmation of what we already seem to be doing) that if we shoot for nine products a year, we do:

- 3 traditional I.F. (Stationfall, Lurking Horror, etc.)
- 3 "enhanced" I.F. (Beyond Zorkquest IV, Illuminated text, etc.)
- 3 misc. (non-I.F. stories, outside collaborators, etc.)

There was some discussion of whether that's too few traditional games, or too many games of all sorts. The question of whether Lurking Horror and Stationfall will hurt each other's sales was brought up. Once we find out we'll have more data on how many games the market will support.

It might also be nice to have a game "in the bank," to fill in for a delayed Bureaucracy, for example. I got the impression that Mike would rather release anything finished. We may end up with a game in the bank anyway (the Challenge game, if we end up distributing Guild of Thieves).

Doing fewer games a year would be cheaper in terms of overhead (fewer Imps needed, fewer testers, fewer everything) but more dangerous because then if one of your (say) three games a year bombs, you are up a creek. If you do nine games a year, a bomb or two can be absorbed; you're unhappy, but still in business.

From the 'Aborted' directory: **Game ideas that did become real games, and ideas that didn't**

THE LURKER IN THE BASEMENT (*The Lurking Horror*)

Our first Horror game. The plot is by H.P. Lovecraft out of Steven King. (According to Brian, it even is somewhat like "The Amityville Horror" [ecch!]). You find a thingy in your basement which opens into a Lovecraftian subterranean world. Lots of squishy Freudian monsters. Lots of gore, too, I guess. Probably rated PG-13, at least.

PSYCHOANALYSIS

Even the highly publicized Racter can't parse English as well as we can. This game would involve exploring a character's mind (obviously an interesting character: most likely a terrorist) to find the key to converting/curing him. Could be done in straight interactive form, where you are always conversing with him, or as a more conventional adventure (like Zelazny's "Dream Master") where you can literally explore his mind via some clever SF gimmick.

SABOTEUR (similar to *Border Zone*)

This is a puzzle-oriented ToA with a James Bond theme. You parachute into the Amazonian jungle to destroy the deadly MacGuffin Ray being built by a mad scientist for an evil South American dictator. Little does the dictator know that the scientist plans to RULE THE WORLD! Cackle, chortle. Treacherous guides, nubile young ladies, pits full of crocodiles, great gadgetry, and all that yummy stuff.

----- Non-I.F. stuff-----

D&D ASSISTANT

Would use graphics and stuff to do all the tedious junk associated with D&D. Could work with TSR, I guess. (Though if we didn't, we could make versions for other D&D systems than theirs, as well).

HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT SIMULATOR

A realistic fencing and other hand-to-hand combat simulator, where you see what happens, where practice improves your ability, and so on. There might even be a fantasy mode where you take on a dragon with an Uzi machine gun.

SUPER-ROGUE

Make a version of Rogue (i.e., exploration/combat/visual oriented type adventure game) with better graphics (using DIP) and real puzzles (like I.F. games) instead of continual monster hacking. Make it ego-centric like Maze (and Wizardry). Have better monster animation. etc. etc. Could be a big Graphics Group project.

SOFTWARE OBSERVATORY

This would be a program for examining the heavens. It would display constellations, planets, etc. It would allow you to play with the time setting to see the future/past of planet positions, and with space to see constellations and such from other parts of the earth. Not sure how much lack of decent floating point number support hampers this? Gerry Sussman at MIT is doing this on a custom designed computer...

(*Sky Travel and Distant Suns are two programs by other companies for viewing the stars.*)

ZORK ZERO

Genre: Fantasy

Rating: probably Standard

System: definitely Extended

Estimated Development Time: 10-12 months

As the name implies, a prequel to the Zork trilogy. It would be set in the Great Underground Empire, and covering a long period of time, from the end of the reign of Dimwit Flathead in 789 through the fall of the GUE in 883, and possibly through 948 (the year of the Zork trilogy). It would almost certainly end "west of a white house." There would be some story, probably about as much as Enchanter or Sorcerer. For the most part, though, it would be an intensely puzzle-oriented game with a huge geography.

STATIONFALL

Genre: Science Fiction

Rating: Standard or Advanced

System: Classic

Estimated Development Time: 8 months

The long-awaited sequel to Planetfall. Since your promotion to Lieutenant First Class in the Stellar Patrol of the Third Galactic Union following a commendable job on Resida five years ago, you have failed to advance your rank or career at all. Elevation to LFC has meant that your routine of constant mopping drudgery has been replaced by a routine of constant paperwork drudgery, and your harsh commanding officer Ensign Blather has been replaced by the bubbleheaded and bureaucratic Captain Measle. Your latest assignment: to shuttle over to Station Alpha Beta Epsilon Gamma Omega 78-C-985 Sector Delta Delta VH-98, in order to pick up a crate of new shuttle fuel requisition form requisition forms. You stop by the robot pool to pick up a robot aide for the trip ... one familiar figure comes bounding toward you... "Hey, take Floyd! Floyd best robot aide in pool!" After a brief trip, you arrive at the station. It is deserted, your shuttle has stopped working you can't raise your ship, and Floyd has begun to act oddly...

MINUTE MYSTERIES

Genre: Mystery

Rating: probably Standard or mixed

System: definitely Extended

Estimated Development Time: 12 months

Four mini-mysteries, each set in the same locale, but during different periods of time. I can see one set during the 1910's, one during WWII, one during the present, and one at some point in the next century. For the location, I'm leaning toward a small cruise ship. (Naturally, I'd have to spend several weeks on cruise ships doing research). Some ideas for the individual mysteries: In one of them, it turns out that you were actually the killer, but are suffering amnesia because of a blow received during a struggle with the victim -- you first think that the blow was inflicted by the murderer! In another, you would be the descendant of a character in one of the previous stories, attempting to prove the innocence of your relative, and getting mixed up in a new murder, and having to solve both. The last story, set in the future, would also have some sci-fi elements.

ATTACK OF THE FREONS (and other stories)

Genre: Science Fiction

Rating: probably Advanced

System: could go either way

Estimated Development Time: 10 months

This is based on a fairly long short story I wrote a few years ago. It would be a game with a good blend of story and puzzle elements. There would be 3 story lines, each one based on a science fiction cliché -- time travel, a mad scientist, and invasion from outer space. However, all three stories, which at first seem totally independent, end up tying together. I won't say how; even the fact that they do at all should be kept top secret.

BLAZING PARSERS

Genre: Tales of Adventure

Rating: probably Standard

System: probably Classic

Estimated Development Time: 8-9 months

The western comedy that Jerry started. A lot of the basic design and a little bit of the implementation is already done. If you don't recall, the basic story line is a spaghetti western with all the usual characters

and situations, and the basic gag is that there are several parsers with different personalities and degrees of competency that are constantly wandering "in" and "out" of the game. Another gag revolves around Mr. Smith, who can imitate nearly anything: "There is a bowling ball here." TAKE BOWLING BALL. "Oops! It's only Mr. Smith, doing his famous bowling ball imitation." Or... "President Rutherford B. Hayes is at the bar." PRESIDENT HAYES, HOWDY. "As you begin speaking, you realize that it isn't President Rutherford B. Hayes after all, but merely Mr. Smith, doing his rather awesome President Rutherford B. Hayes imitation."

INTERACTIVE BIBLE

Genre: Fantasy? TOA? Rating: probably Standard System: could go either way
Estimated Development Time: 8-10 months

Imagine the ad campaign: "Have you always thought that God screwed it up? Try it yourself!" The opening room: VOID. Suggested first moves LET THERE BE LIGHT, CREATE WORLD. Imagine the response to EXAMINE LIGHT: You see that it is good. As the "story" progresses, you would become other characters. As Adam, you might decide to shun the serpent's apple, stay in Eden and die of boredom; as Noah, you could refuse to build the ark and drown in the Flood, or forget to bring along two horses, changing the entire shape of human history. The writing would naturally all be in shalts and begats and haths.

LEATHER GODESSES OF PHOBOS

Genre: Sci-Fi/Humor/Adult Rating: probably Standard System: probably Classic
Estimated Development Time: 8 months

A titillating romp through universe to save earth from the evil characters of the title. Featuring lots of anachronistic sword fights aboard interstellar hyperspace battle cruisers, seduction of planetary overlords, encounters with bizarre aliens who's main motives always seem to be to tear clothes off humans. Very soft-core; see Barbarella for an example.

"THE VIABLE IDEA"

Genre: Mixed/Experimental Rating: probably Standard or Mixed System: could go either way
Estimated Development Time: 6 months

An idea I originally came up with as a way to produce a game in much less time than could normally be expected, but which I think is an interesting idea even without that need. Basically, one person (the Editor) designs a tiny "piece" of a game -- a couple of rooms, a few objects with action routines, maybe even a character. Working from this, in complete isolation, five (or so) imps would write a small mini-game (a couple of puzzles, ten to twenty rooms) around that original core. The Editor would be responsible for integrating the five ideas together, blending the code, making sure that there wasn't any gross repetition in the stories, and, of course, fixing bugs. I think that seeing how different people went in different directions from the same starting point would make for an interesting interactive fiction experience.

COLLABORATIONS (?)

Truffles

How about a video style game about Truffles? You control pigs and dogs which sniff out truffles. They dig when they find them and you have to stop them from eating the truffles they dig up. Also, the dogs can be attracted away by cats, and the truffles you collect can be eaten by wild boars.

IDEAS FOR NEXT PROJECT, by Stu Galley -- 10/20/86

MIDNIGHT RIDER or ESCAPE FROM BOSTON:

This is interactive historical fiction in the form of a spy story: the main character is Paul Revere the artisan, and his goals are both to obtain secret plans from the bad guys and to foil those plans by warning the good guys before it's too late. The setting is real, historical Boston in 1775 (crooked streets, shops, pubs, sea on all sides, and British bad guys on the prowl) and roads to the west. The puzzles involve sneaking about after curfew, meeting fellow rebels secretly, and making your way toward Concord, ending with a chase scene when a British patrol spots you. No historical knowledge is required, but you can learn plenty by participating in the story. (Possible gimmick: the story is told in third person, from multiple viewpoints, like some traditional fiction.) (Other possible gimmick: the story can be inter-cut with a similar story set in modern Boston, where you have to ride the "T" to Concord before the buses shut down for the night!)

MILLIWAYS or RESTAURANT AT THE END OF THE UNIVERSE:

Takes up where "Hitchhiker's" left off. Manufactured planets, Deep Thought, white mice, time travel, 1001 verb tenses, digital watches, the Frogstar, Total Perspective Vortex, the End of History! [Does Douglas really want to work on this at this time? Does it matter?]

CHECKPOINT (revived) (*Border Zone*):

You, an innocent train traveller in a foreign country, get mixed up with spies and have to be as clever as they to survive. Or, you take the viewpoint of a spy in a similar scenario. Much of the groundwork for this product is already laid; what it needs is some "flash" in the style of 007 movies, and a more varied and/or interesting plot.

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

Fantasy sells big, right? The "Alice" books are a fantasy that I feel expert about. I pick the second title because the chessboard geography gives better feedback about the player's progress. And for its more adaptable features, such as the maze in the garden of live flowers. But, like movie adaptations, elements of both books would appear.

SCIEN TERRIFIC AMERICAN

There are several possible directions to take this: humorous, fantastical, serious, etc. How about an interactive version of the magazine, where the "Amateur Scientist" needs a list of items for experiments, the main articles become separate research labs, and the "Computer Recreations" are real and playable? [Is this project still viable?]

Date: 18 Aug 1988 1726-EDT
From: Eat At Robber's <CHALLENGE at FRED>
Subject: Leather sequel
To: swg
cc: JoeY, md, challenge

Stu:

As I mentioned last week, JoeY has asked me to drop the "Oz" portion of my next game - while keeping the "Hollywood, 80's, sex, spoof" aspects—and to turn it into a sequel to LGOP.

Whether it is to be called "Leather Goddesses of Hollywood," "Gas Pump Girls Meet the Pulsating Inconvenience From Planet X," "Hollywood Hot Tubs," or something Completely Different is still up for grabs.

As technical advisor emeritus (species californius), amicus humani generis, and former purveyor of r-rated goods to under-aged innocents, can you take a look at the following Southern California (Hollywood-ish) locales and suggest others that might be fun to fool around with.

Valley (as in valley-girl)	Muscle Beach
Disneyland	Club Med
Rodeo Drive	Hollywood and Vine
Labrea Tar Pits	Hollywood Hills
Beverly Hills	Hollywood Wax Museum
Hollywood walk of fame	LAX
Playboy Mansion (Possibly re-named & otherwise suitably disguised)	
Universal Studios (Possibly re-named & otherwise suitably disguised)	
Freeways (On & Off ramps)	

Incidentally, some interiors I'm thinking about are:

Mall (Upper & lower levels)	Massage parlour
Tanning salon	Punk club
Hairdresser's	Singles bar
Health-food store	Junk-food restaurant
Hot tub	Sym/health club (pool, sauna, locker rooms)
Tattoo parlour	Game Show studio
Strip Joint	Frederick's of Hollywood
Movie Studio	Ingenuer's trailer
Sushi Bar	Cinemaplex Theatres (Maze opportunity)
Palm Reader's Place	Astrologer's Place
Fake Swami's Place	Leather shop
Old Actor's Home	

I will be out of the office all day tomorrow (8/19), so I'll check back with you next week.
Thanks. Bob

An idea that I know has been mildly kicked around:

The game opens with the player awakening in an unknown location and finding that he/she/it (henceforth "he" for brevity's sake) is suffering from amnesia. The game would presumably involve finding various objects that provide clues as to exactly who the player is and why he was hit over the head, presumably culminating in the player finding out that he had the knowledge to prevent some sort of dastardly event and then racing the clock to prevent it. (Perhaps it takes place in one building that our hero finally leaves, and ends with him going to a payphone to alert the appropriate people to prevent the dastardly deed.)

One neat hack that probably gets thrown in somewhere (or even several places) is something that sets off memories that turn out to be wrong. (The obvious example here is finding a wallet that isn't yours and thinking, for whatever reason, that it is actually yours and that you're an insurance salesman from Belvedere, MD.)

A pitfall will be developing the proper amount of identity for the player; he's gonna have to be able to figure who he is (the bank officer who had the vault combinations or whatever) without overlaying too much detail like a name or a gender.

Another small problem is that it's not too easy to imagine what kind of swell stuff you can put in the package when the only information one has access to is what's in front of one upon awakening; it seems that whoever left the player lying is unlikely to leave lots of fascinating stuff in the room. This is hopefully not an important consideration in INTERLOGIC game design, but it's there somewhere.

-JW

NOTE: There is a movie I've never seen called Mirage (starring Gregory Peck, if memory serves) that I think deals with a similar sort of situation. One big advantage that a movie character would have, of course, is the ability to get to lots of far-apart places without worrying about what's in between or what happens if he makes a wrong turn.

I think the game package could have lots of things -- a picture of the tattoo on your arm, the scrap of newspaper lying nearby, the pawn shop ticket in your pocket, etc.

All I remember about Mirage, which I saw on TV when I was around 10, was that a watermelon kept falling out a window repeatedly. The watermelon turned out to be a body.

How about a game where the geography and objects are created by the player? Everything starts out blank, and the player has a bunch of labels, like "exit", "sword", etc., which can be used to identify things. I wonder if this can be done using current zork technology? Note that the vocabulary is already there, it's just the changing of the various tables for objects that's new.

This could also just be a problem in some other game; a blank area that you have to fill in "properly" (perhaps with magic?) to solve a particular problem.

One way to actually work this would be to have an object called FORMLESS-OBJECT, and then swap in the real object associated with the name given it by the player.

Here's an idea for a problem in a mystery with a monkey. The monkey has witnessed the crime, and at some point, or at several points, or if you lure him into the Scene Of The Crime Room with a Banana, he mimics some important action from the crime sequence that gives you an important clue as to what happened.

It seems as though a monkey would be an interesting "character" in a game with or without this problem.

7/21/88 -- Joe Prosser's adult Infocomic idea

Characters:

Husband

Gets more and more paranoid as film progresses.

Wife

Butcher

Intelligent man, handsome (this could drive the husband crazy), will give the viewer the impression that he's the protagonist.

Friend

It becomes more and more apparent that he's a psychopath.

Opening scene:

In rich house. Husband has been drinking. He and wife are arguing. Maybe it gets violent; he slaps her. He threatens to kill her. Cut to credits.

Plot from husband's viewpoint:

He goes into butcher shop [hungover], butcher realizes he's upset, asks what's wrong. Butcher is a trustworthy guy; he confides wife is missing. He shows typewritten note which threatens death of wife if disappearance is revealed to cops. Butcher looks strangely overly-distressed. Why??? [I think the first note should be typed, the rest in her handwriting.]

Husband goes to work; confides in co-worker who's also a friend. Friend is sympathetic, urges husband not to call police at risk of harm to wife.

Some woman has been putting the moves on the husband. He doesn't tell her wife has disappeared, and resists her advances. But they still get kind of cosy. As they leave together (or whatever), friend walks by in background. Jump to friend here, and learn that his suspicions are confirmed -- husband and woman are involved.

Husband arrives home to find wife sitting watching tv. At first he only sees her through the window, from the back, or whatever. Coming closer, he sees there's a knife in her chest! But there's no blood; it's a mannequin that looks exactly like her!!! There's a typed ransom note clenched between her teeth.

The mannequins continue to arrive [2 or 3 more, perhaps one is found hanging by the neck at the top of some stairs; long shadows slowly swaying down the steps. there's a light behind it, all you see is the silhouette.], each with some violence done to it. [Perhaps the mannequins are made to look dead now. The mannequin looks like its been hung.] He pays half the ransom. After the second dummy, the friend suggests that she's engineering it so she can get money to run off with her lover. Points out rationale for this. Suggests she can't leave without her full share of money; He said "why not? It's cheaper for you than divorce and quicker for her too!" Husband gets really mad at wife for doing this to him.

Friends seems to know more and more about the situation, [husband is really starting to get paranoid now. He starts to feel that he being followed by, of all people, the butcher. more on that later.] even what wife was wearing on evening of disappearance. This is very subtle. Husband: "Her clothes aren't even missing! What would she have worn?" Friend: "Oh, if she running off to her lover, no doubt something sexy like a negligee." [more detail about the negligee would be too obvious.] Husband thinks: "Gasp. Francine has a nightgown like that!" He goes home, checks, finds that one is missing. Husband suspects the friend is the wife's lover, her innocent victim!

He decides to follow the friend. They go to warehouse in seedy part of town. Inside are mannequins, and the wife! He shoots her. The end.

OR

He decides to set trap with rest of ransom money, insist on leaving it in certain place, follow whoever

goes to pick it up. The friend picks up the money. The husband follows the friend to the warehouse, etc. as above.

Butcher's viewpoint:

The butcher is a close friend of the wife who has helped him out in some delicate situation. The situation is still not resolved; he can't resolve it without her help, and now she is gone! Perhaps the wife is a social worker who has been helping his daughter recover from a drug addiction, or whatever. He is devastated that the wife is missing.

Butcher believes that husband killed wife and wrote the note himself. [that's why only the first one needs to be typed. I think!] "but", the butcher asks himself, "why doesn't he just go to the cops since nothing can actually happen to her?" He decides "he really wants to play the whole thing out" [perhaps some 'Rear Window' innocent bystander speculation here. More on that later.]

Butcher starts to follow husband. He also sees him getting cosy with bimbo. This confirms his theory about hubby's motive. Following further, he watches as hubby carries a stiff looking female body [mannequin] to an incinerator and stuffs it in; perhaps breaking off an arm to fit it in! Later there is a scene where hubby and friend are in a bar; butcher is there also, at a different table with his back turned, but within earshot. [put camera at perimeter of bar. Have it slowly pan around until all three are seen.] What he hears makes him speculate even more wildly.

This leads to a new ending. Butcher follows husband to warehouse but doesn't see friend. Shoots husband after husband shoots wife.

Overview of an Infocom Star Trek Game (hereinafter referred to as "Star Trek")

"Star Trek" will be a strategy game based upon the television series of the same name. "Star Trek" will include space exploration and combat with hostile aliens (though players may be on "peaceful missions," as on the TV show, and be penalized for indiscriminate warfare).

Graphics will be used both to facilitate strategic gameplay (e.g., seeing where your starship is relative to a starbase) and to make the game more attractive and visually appealing. Music and/or sound effects will also be used to make the game appealing and to give players an authentic "Star Trek" experience.

"Star Trek" can be played either by one person (playing "against" the computer) or by multiple players on separate computers (playing against each other, or teamed up against the computer). The player will be Captain James T. Kirk of the starship Enterprise (or, in a multiplayer game, the commanding officer of a similar vessel).

Game commands will be issued by interacting with the officers and men of the starship's crew. This will naturally include the well-known crew members: Mr. Spock, Uhura, Sulu, "Scotty," Chekov, etc. The player will "talk" to these characters by typing natural-English-like sentences on the computer keyboard ("Mr. Sulu, set a course for star system 30," "Uhura, get me starfleet command," "Chekov, fire the torpedo," etc.), and the crew members will respond appropriately and in character. It will be possible to relieve the player of "strategic tedium" by giving the crewmembers standing orders ("Chekov, shields to configuration alpha"). In the multiplayer mode, the player may also send messages to other (human) players.

Successful game play, including battle sequences, will not require hand/eye coordination, but rather strategically commanding the crew to use limited resources. The play of the game will be nearly identical from computer to computer, though the graphics presentation may vary from machine to machine.

"Star Trek" will be available initially for the IBM PC.

The following issues remain unresolved relative to "Star Trek":

- 1) Can we license the "Star Trek" name under reasonable terms?
- 2) Can we sufficiently differentiate ourselves from any present and future S & S "Star Trek" games?
- 3) What is the real market for multiplayer games?
- 4) How important is "real" graphics to the potential success of the game? There are a number of approaches to graphics and each requires some tradeoffs.

APPROACH 1: Use "character" graphics

APPROACH 2: Write a machine specific game that is a great graphics game.

APPROACH 3: Modify EZIP and the development system to incorporate machine specific graphics as part of a generally machine independent game.

APPROACH 4: Reinvent DIP but do it right this time.

The advantage of approach 1 is that we could write the game without a large amount of development system/EZIP modification. The disadvantage approach 1 is that the game would be less sexy especially on machines like the ST and the Amiga. Approach 2 would definitely result in a sexy game but it would not exploit the strengths of Infocom. Approaches 3 and 4 both have the advantage of producing a sexy game with the Infocom flavor of interaction. The disadvantage of these approaches is the time and resources required to develop the product. Out of approaches 3 and 4, 3 is more attractive in that it would not require solving some difficult fundamental research problems.

June 17, 1988

Joel Berez
President
Infocom, Inc.
125 Cambridge Park Drive
Cambridge, MA 02140

Dear Joel:

Enclosed is the proposed outline of our third game. The game currently has no title, but it is to be a parody of the movie "The Wizard of Oz." The goal is to produce a hilarious and wacky, off-the-wall comedy.

The underpinnings of the game rely on the same principle as the other games in the "Immortal Legends" series. It deals with a character who is already firmly established in the popular mind, who comes complete with an already-identified supporting cast, and whose actions take place in an evocative environment.

The subject matter is delicate in that the treatment must be wacky enough to be genuinely enjoyable, but not so satirical or biting that it creates a negative reaction. I think that your people have good radar in this area, and that our relationship with them is close enough to keep the game on the right track.

I look forward to hearing your reactions as soon as possible.

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Bates
President

cc: Jon Palace
Mike Dornbrook
Stu Galley

Program Description - Program III OZ

Plot Notes

The game opens with the player, Dorothy, on her farm in Kansas. Dorothy's daily routine is dull, tedious and degrading. Every five moves or so, the game hauls her away from whatever she is doing to muck out the horse stall, shovel the droppings out of the goat pen, scrub the floor of the chicken coop, or clean out the privy.

Needless to say, Dorothy is eager to get away from all this. So eager, in fact, that for the rest of the game, a "jigs-up" results not in death, but a fate worse than death - a return to her odiferous duties at the farm.

Dorothy leaves the farm and comes across Professor Marvel. He offers her various snake-oil products, and one in particular catches her eye. He sees this and touts it to her, saying, "What do you do when you've got to go to school but there's a test you haven't studied for? It's no use hoping for a snow storm. Why, what you need is 'Tornado-in-a-Bottle.' Just open up this little fella and you'll have a Texas twister faster than you can say atmospheric disturbance. But when you open the bottle, be careful where you stand. I guarantee that as soon as you release it, that tornado will head right for the nearest

mobile home park."

Dorothy buys the bottle, Toto bites Marvel on the ankle, and the enraged professor chases them back to her house where she opens the bottle. The ensuing tornado whisks her and Toto off to Oz. Dorothy has to steer the house as it falls so that it lands on the Wicked Witch of the East. But the Oz they land in is different from the one we are used to. It is more like Southern California - sort of Oz-gone-commercial. You can buy Oz-burgers and Oz-dogs at fast-food stands; bumper stickers say "I (heart) Oz" and "Honk if you like Glinda." The Munchkins talk in Valley-girl-speak, fer sure.

Glinda, the Good Witch of the North, floats in on a bubble and says, "Now that you have killed the Wicked Witch of the East, the only evil person left in Oz is the Wicked Witch of the West. Of course, there is the Fairly Bad Witch of the North-by-northwest, but she's getting old and doesn't amount to much."

Glinda keeps the ruby slippers for herself, giving Dorothy instead the striped socks that the dead witch was wearing. "Don't take them off," Glinda says. "The longer you wear them, the more powerful they will become."

Then Glinda says that although Dorothy has done everyone a good service by dropping a house on the wicked witch, still, she did break the law in doing so. She's guilty not only of witch-slaughter, but of flying without a pilot's license, littering, and re-locating a residential structure without filing an environmental impact study.

Glinda thinks about a punishment for Dorothy. She considers making her play a year in the Munchkin NBA, or locking her in a small room with an Oz-way distributor. But she finally decides that only the Wizard of Oz can choose the appropriate punishment, so she selects a "trial date" and says that Dorothy must appear before Oz by then. If Dorothy fails to get to the Emerald City by the appointed time, she gets sent back to Kansas.

Once Glinda has pronounced sentence she says, "I'm sorry, I have to go now. The next bubble is coming, and if I miss it there won't be another one along for 2 hours. Service has gotten so poor since the budget cuts." She floats out of sight.

When Dorothy starts off down the yellow brick road, she quickly comes to a crossroads. The direction she chooses determines which of her companions she will meet first. (This should help reduce some of the linearity of the game)

Each of the people she comes to decides to join her in her journey. Each of them wants something from the wizard. The possibilities for the scarecrow include:

- 1) He's tired of being unable to do his job because he has no brains, and so what he wants is a new job that doesn't require brains - such as politician, clerk at the department of motor vehicles, or senior executive at a large corporation.
- 2) He's afraid the farmers will get mad at him for not being able to scare away the crows, and so what he wants is liability insurance (which, being a con man, Oz will be only too happy to sell him).

When Dorothy finds the tin man, she also has to find the oil can and oil him down. Once she does this she discovers that either:

- 1) He thinks of himself as a walking lightning rod, and what he really wants are rubber galoshes for insulation.
- 2) He wants to be Ziebarted (rust-proofed).

The lion could

- 1) Be an effeminate character whose burning desire in life is to get a species-change operation. "Inside me there is a gentle lamb just waiting to get out. A few hours on the table, and a couple weeks in the Bahamas, and I'll be a new creature."
- 2) Be a hypochondriac who is afraid that eating raw meat every day is too unhealthy. What he wants from the wizard is either a barbecue grill, 10 hours of psycho-analysis to get over his fears, or a good diet program.

The four of them (five, counting Toto) start off for Oz. Along the way, they have to survive the poppy field, deal with the flying monkeys, gain entrance to the castle of the Wicked Witch of the West, and kill her.

Once they have killed the witch, they gain entrance to Emerald City and have their audience with Oz. They discover the wizard is a fraud. The wizard gives each of Dorothy's companions some totally useless object that he claims will solve each of their problems. He then sneaks off without helping Dorothy at all. Glinda floats in on the 7:28 bubble and says that Dorothy could have used her socks all along to get what she wanted. (How, I'm not yet sure, because I'm not yet sure what will represent success for Dorothy.) Dorothy follows Glinda's instructions and wins the game.

Alternative Possibilities

The following are a couple of even more off-the-wall ideas, which may be worth incorporating into the above story, or developing on their own.

LEATHER GODDESS OF OZ

Essentially the same story as above, but with more suggestive language, racier insinuations, and a sub-stratum of sex running throughout. We could substitute a whip for the striped socks and dress Dorothy in leather.

ASSAULT ON OZ

Dorothy arrives in Oz and learns either that

- 1) The wicked witch is holding the wizard captive or,
- 2) The wizard is a drug kingpin (he controls the poppy fields) who is a tyrannical despot and who has enslaved the inhabitants of Emerald City.

In either case, Dorothy assembles her SWAT team. The tin man is a hopeless-romantic ex-mercenary, like Rick in Casablanca. He handles infiltration and reconnaissance. The scarecrow is a Marxist radical intellectual who is also an expert in communications. The lion is a wild-eyed extremist who specializes in explosives & demolitions.

In the course of this action-packed adventure game, they collect the various items they need to assault the fortress, including plastic explosives, blasting caps, a grappling hook, gun, radio, etc.

The game culminates with the storming of the fortress and either the release of the wizard, (scenario 1) or his downfall (scenario 2).

MOVIE WITHIN A GAME

The game would be as described in the main proposal. But at some point soon after Dorothy gets to Oz, the player learns that the people in the game - including Dorothy - have a dual reality. They are not only characters within the story, but also actors playing those characters.

This could be used sparingly - just a few scattered complaints about how hot the make-up is under the lights, for example - or we could make the whole game a dual-level experience, with separate puzzles for each level and a final victory that cannot be achieved unless all the puzzles in both levels have been completed.

This approach has some very practical uses.

- 1) Default winner handlers:

Wicked Witch of the West: "Forget it, kid. I just get paid to laugh maniacally and give you a hard time."

Auntie Em and Uncle Henry: "I'm sorry, honey. We do love you, but they made us such bland, boring characters that we can't do anything but say we love you."

- 2) Responding to reasonable inputs that the author doesn't want to handle:

The Director yells, "Cut! Dorry...Baby. We can't have you doing that, OK honey? I know the script calls for you to improvise, but L.B. would go nuts over the figures if we tried to include everything in the budget. So be a doll, OK? Stick to what's reasonable."

- 3) Limiting the amount of "game damage" that can be done with certain objects. If a player acquires a certain object in the game and decides to return to a previous location to try to use it, then the Director can yell,
"Cut! Look, honey. We've already struck that set. I know no one told you, but we're trying to save a few bucks, OK? Look at it this way: on the one hand, you can't go back. But on the other hand, you don't need to. So whaddya say. Let's go with the flow. Roll 'em!"
- 4) The Director can also be used as the hint giver.
"Well, kid. We really want you to improvise. But we are over budget and behind schedule, so I guess it wouldn't hurt to give you a little push in the right direction."

If we pursue this option, the Director would inform Dorothy at the beginning that he wants her to improvise the script as she goes along. We need to have him encourage improvisation so that the player doesn't get the sense that there is only one way to do things.

If the two-level game is rejected as too complicated, it still might be interesting at the end of a one-level game to have a Director yell, "Cut! That's a wrap. Good job, people. The movie will hit the theaters in six months."

Mr. Joel Berez
President
Infocom, Inc.
125 CambridgePark Drive
Cambridge, MA 02140

July 15, 1988

Dear Joel:

This is a revised proposal for a game based on the Wizard of Oz.

When I first suggested a Oz parody, the idea was enthusiastically received by many Infopeople. Although my first proposal failed to fulfill the promise of that initial excitement, it still seems that there is a great idea lurking in here somewhere, and that it is worth it to find that idea and convert it into a game.

I believe Infocom's initial enthusiastic reaction is one that will be repeated in stores across the country. People will see the game and say, "Oh! A Wizard of Oz Parody. What a neat idea!" Our problem is not how to get people interested in the idea, The problem is delivering a product that lives up to those initial expectations.

With that in mind, I have put together the proposal that follows, and I look forward to receiving your reaction to it.

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Bates
President

OZ PARODY

- 1) This is not an Immortal Legend game. It is not an attempt to create a story that would fit into the existing body of literature on the subject.
- 2) The game is a spoof, and it needs a title that presents it as such. Although the following titles could not be used for the game, they convey the flavor that I'm looking for:

Godzilla meets the Wizard of Oz	Attack of the Killer Oz-moids
Fast Times at Oz High	Invasion of the Oz-snatchers
Dorothy Does Oz	Ozzie Dearest.
- 3) The game's action takes place in the Oz that we remember from the movie; but there are incongruous features in the landscape. Somewhat as the Wiz used New York City as its Oz, this game will draw on elements of the Southern California landscape and 80's life-style for humor.
- 4) The cover art needs to support this comedic and possibly racy theme. One possibility is to show Dorothy and the Lion in a hot tub, with the Tin Man and the Scarecrow standing by, and the Yellow Brick Road winding off into the distance. Depending on how racy or suggestive we want to get, we can clothe Dorothy in anything from a gingham bathing suit to virtually nothing.
- 5) With the right title and cover art, I don't believe the "sacredness" of Oz is going to be too much of a problem. The people who buy the game will certainly not be expecting a tame re-telling of the Oz story. (And those who want such a treatment should surely be able to figure out that this isn't the place to look for it.) Nevertheless, I realize that the boundaries are somewhat tighter than they might be with other parodies and I intend to respect them. For example, I wouldn't require Dorothy to perform scatological activities as the solution to a puzzle. (What the player wants to try on his own, however, is a different story).
- 6) The player should not believe that he is in Southern California. He should truly believe that he is in Oz, but that Oz and its inhabitants are slightly skewed from the way they were in the movie. Consequently, I envision the taking the geography primarily from the movie, rather than from California. For example, the letters EMERALD CITY might appear high on a hillside overlooking the town; and although there will not be a beach or an ocean (because there were none in Oz), there might be a lifeguard sitting on a chair overlooking a field of sunbathers.
- 7) Dorothy will still have the basic goals that she had in the movie. She will land in Oz and need to go see the Wizard. However, some of the humor and puzzles will come from Oz being a more practical place than it is in the film. For example:
 - a) The Yellow Brick Road is a toll-road. She has to pay to travel on it.
 - b) She has to eat, and the only place that food is available is from fast-food joints that sell things like Baumburgers and L. Frankfurters.
 - c) When she has to buy things, she uses a credit card that Glinda gave her. She starts off with 50 Ozmids credit (for dropping a house on the Wicked Witch of the East), and she has to accumulate more in the course of the game to get everything done. (100 Ozmids, of course, equals one Wizbuck.)
 - d) The bubble that Glinda travels on is actually a sort of inter-city bus that is a lot more

glamorous on the outside than on the inside. Dorothy and her companions can travel on it, but they do have to pay the tired, bored driver.

- e) When the Tin Man gets banged up, Dorothy has to take him to a body shop. The mechanic says, "Well lemme see. I'm kinda backed up right now. I got a bronzed goddess who's gotta be back at the tanning booth by noon, and a man of steel who needs some structural work. But I think I can fit you in. Lemme put him up on the lift and give you an estimate."
- 8) The plot follows the movie in its broadest details, but varies from it in the particulars.

Dorothy gets caught up in the tornado, and her house lands on the Wicked Witch of the East. Glinda comes in on the 2:15 bubble and tells Dorothy that the only person who can help her return home is the Wizard.

When Dorothy starts off down the yellow brick road, she does not simply happen upon her companions. She must do something to "acquire" them. She may have to buy some straw, for example, and build her own scarecrow. Or she may have to find a way to free the Lion from a zoo or circus.

In the course of the game, it will be necessary for her to have "activated" each of the companions, as there will be tasks to perform that only they can do. For example, they may come upon a cute and lovable - but dangerous - furry little creature (like a Tribble from Star Trek). The animal may have to be killed for them to advance (or survive), but Dorothy can't kill it because it is too cute, the scarecrow can't figure out how to kill it, and the Lion is afraid of it. Only the Tin Man - because he has no heart - can perform the nasty but necessary deed.

In the same way, there will be a task that only a person with no brain can do, and one that cannot be performed by anyone with courage.

Once they arrive in Emerald City, they discover that getting in to see Oz is a series of puzzles in itself. When they finally get through, they find that the Wizard lives in a mansion, is constantly surrounded by beautiful women, smokes a pipe, and usually wears pajamas.

Oz tells them that he will grant their wishes if they will bring him the mascara stick of the Wicked Witch of the West. She turns out to be a make-up laden televangelist who is constantly denouncing the Wizard's life-style. When they solve the puzzle and get her mascara stick, she cries such volumes of tears that she melts herself.

Upon their return to the Wizard, he tells the scarecrow that he doesn't need a brain, what he needs is a job he can do without one. He offers to make him a Network TV executive in charge of prime-time scheduling. Because the Tin Man has no heart, Oz offers him a job as an agent. Because the Lion has no courage, Oz tells him he could get work as a yes-man for a producer. Each of the characters has the dignity to turn down these jobs.

Oz gives Dorothy the option of returning home to Kansas, or moving into the mansion with him and becoming next month's centerspread. Perhaps we will leave it up to the player to choose.

Assembled from the following files in the “VeryLost” directory:

<u>Page(s)</u>	<u>File</u>
2-3	About.txt
4	Misc / Implemen.txt
5-8	Aborted / Creation.txt
9	Misc / Gnutriv.txt
10-11	Infodope / Dope.txt, / Infodope.txt, / Infodopr.txt
12-13	Misc / Info.txt
14-17	Misc / Meeting.txt
18	Aborted / Ideas.txt
19-20	Aborted / Next.txt
20	Aborted / Truffles.txt
21	Aborted / Boston.txt
22	Aborted / LG2Idea.txt
23	Aborted / Amnesia.txt, / Blank.txt, / Monkey.txt
24-25	Aborted / Thriller.txt
26	Aborted / Trek.txt
27-32	Aborted / Oz.txt, / OzOld.txt