

InsideADRIFT

The newsletter of the ADRIFT community

Issue 21

January/February 2005

Contents

News and announcements.

1. **Main news** (Updated ADRIFT website launched and hacked; Results of the InsideADRIFT Awards; OARS on the move again; Reviews Exchange Issue 2 out now.)
2. **Competition news**
(*Game of the Year Competition results; InsideADRIFT Spring Comp announced*)
4. **Forum news** (Changes are coming)

Regular features

2. Editorial
3. Drifters birthdays
4. Events diary
4. Drifters Toolbox: DAZ Studio reviewed by KF
7. ADRIFT recent releases
9. InsideADRIFT merchandise
13. ADRIFT Wordsearch Puzzle: Drifting Authors and Games

Articles

5. *The (big) idea* by KF: Mimesis: is it that important?
7. The Retro Appeal by David Whyld
10. Stop procrastinating and write that game by Lumin

Reference

7. Manual: Overriding system commands

Issue: 21 (Jan/Feb 05)
Issue 22 due out 27 Mar 05

News and announcements

Updated ADRIFT website launched but hacked

On December 12 Campbell Wild announced the launch of an updated version of the main ADRIFT website. Gone are the more static pages and, in their place, is a more modern portal. Unfortunately the site was taken down when it was hacked into, and it was a long haul for Campbell to rebuild the server. Currently email is working, but the site is still offline. The outage began on Thursday 20th January, and it was only on Wednesday 26th that we heard from Campbell what had happened.



Getting back to the positive rather than negative point of this item, and looking at what the site is.

There have been a few early niggles, such as the fact all the files from the old adventures page are there, but initially the author was set to anonymous. This has largely been sorted by people registering with the

Editorial

Well, Christmas and the New Year celebrations have come and gone. Here we are looking ahead to another year of drifting.

My thanks to David Whyld and Lumin for providing two thought provoking articles for this issue.

I think we are all coming to realise just what a large part of our lives the forum has become. As day followed day, with no sign of it's return, the feeling of concern grows, what if it never comes back?

KF

Contact

*Send any suggestions, requests or comments about the newsletter to:
editor@insideadrift.org.uk*

*Find the newsletter at:
<http://www.insideadrift.org.uk/>*

InsideADRIFT merchandise

You can now purchase an exciting InsideADRIFT mug, if you so desire. It has been updated with the new logo.

The store is really not fully operational, if you are interested look at www.cafepress.com/insideadrift

More details can be found on page 9.

site, and then Campbell manually matching the authors with their games. Another problem is that the files are not divided as they were before between games and demos. As a temporary measure the demos have been marked in their titles.

Something that will need to be sorted out is that there is currently no way to download version 3.90 as the link doesn't work.

Results of the InsideADRIFT Awards for 2004

After periods of nominations and voting at the end of 2004 the InsideADRIFT Awards ceremony took place in a chat room on the InsideADRIFT site.

Nominations had been pretty close, with two of the five categories needing an extra round of voting to get them down to three nominations. With the game of the year being decided by the InsideADRIFT Game of the Year Competition, there were six awards to hand out.

The awards and winners are shown below

1. *Most unusual ADRIFT setting/plot of the year. **Wax Worx by Eric Mayer***
2. *Best in game implementation. **Choose your own by David Whyld***
3. *ADRIFT game of the year (winner of InsideADRIFT Game of the Year Competition). **Paint!!! by David Whyld***
4. *Best contribution by a newcomer to the ADRIFT community. **Richard Otter (rotter)***
5. *Biggest contribution to the ADRIFT community (excluding game writing). **Jointly Tedswippet and Mystery***
6. *ADRIFT author of the year. **David Whyld***

As can be seen the awards where a triumph for David Whyld who picked up three awards as a reward for what was another highly productive year for him.

O.A.R.S. on the move again

The Online ADRIFT Reference Site (OARS) has moved back under the control of Andy Nicholas (NickyDude), whose original idea it had been. Mystery felt that she could not devote the necessary time to the site as there were few other contributor.

The new site at <http://oars.madladdesigns.co.uk/> is designed to be a fairly static site, there for when drifters need to look something up.

Drifters birthdays

February

4 WhiteLight (18)
 12 Ambrosine (50)
 14 Joseph_IV (37)
 17 T. Mulkerrins (101)??;
 WeAreLegion (29)
 20 MileStyle (26); Clauz (34)
 21 jvoilleq (32)
 26 Markjd (26)
 27 ralphmerridew (27)
 28 Faraday00 (39)

March

1 Lyle Brown (20); QueenFelix (32)
 3 Black_Mage (14)
 4 lizparnell (24)
 7 Kerikhan (19); onnodb (20); Pattra (16)
 9 Axiom (44)
 11 neo (17)
 17 Superplonker (21)
 20 EdS (36); shadow_2014 (17)
 21 icypenguin (21)
 25 FireWyrn (22)
 26 rgrassi (35); doogle (27)
 27 merryjest (26)
 28 chocolatecake888 (30)
 31 JodoKast (18)

Reviews Exchange Issue 2 out now

The latest issue of the publication dedicated to boosting the feedback to ADRIFT authors.

The following reviews are in this bumper issue

Back To Life... Unfortunately by David Whyld [2 reviews]; reviews by Laurence Moore and Lumin
The Cabin by Blue Roses; review by Lumin
The Cave Of Morpheus by Mark Silcox; review by THoiA
City Of Secrets by Emily Short; review by David Whyld
Darkness by Richard Otter; review by David Whyld
Doctor Who & The Vortex Of Lust by Christopher Cole; review by THoiA
The HeBGB Horror by Eric Mayer; review by David Whyld
The Magic Show by Jason MacInnes [2 reviews]; reviews by David Whyld and Laurence Moore
The Second Three Hour Comp by Various; review by David Whyld
We Are Coming To Get You! by Richard Otter; review by Laurence Moore
The Woods Are Dark by Cannibal; review by THoiA

This issue, along with Issue 1 are available to download as a PDF from <http://www.shadowvault.net/rex.htm>

Competition news roundup

InsideADRIFT Game of the Year Competition 2004

The votes are in and the competition is over. We had an interesting group of games for people to play and judge. In the end we had a pretty clear cut winner as David Whyld's "Paint!!!" was convincingly ahead of his other game "Shards of Memory which tied for second place with Eric Mayer's "Wax Worx".

David Whyld is the winner of the fifty dollar first prize and also wins twenty two dollars fifty along with Eric Mayer for sharing second place.

Full Results

1. *Paint!!!* by David Whyld (davidw) - 9 6 8 7 8 = 38 (Av=7.6)
- =2. *Shards of Memory* by David Whyld (davidw) - 6 8 6 7 7 = 34 (Av=6.8)
- =2. *Wax Worx (Version 2)* by Eric Mayer 6 - 6 8 8 6 = 34 (Av=6.8)
4. *Shadrack's Underground Adventure* by Mystery 4 8 6 7 7 3 = 35 (av=5.83)
5. *The Curse of DragonShrine* by Mystery 5 6 7 6 7 1 = 32 (Av=5.33)
6. *Darkness* by Richard Otter 3 8 5 7 - 3 = 26 (Av=5.2)

Congratulations to our winners and thanks to those who entered and those who judged.

Events Diary

March 2005

Tue 15 Spring Thing 2005

This is the last day for making a statement of intent to enter the Spring Thing

Sat 26 - Sun 27 InsideADRIFT 22 due out

The March/April issue of the newsletter is due to be released this weekend.

Thu 31 Spring Thing 2005

All entries must be in by this date. The judging period will be announced when entries are released (will allow about one week for every three entries)

April 2005

Sun 17 - Sun May 01 InsideADRIFT Spring Competition 2005

The InsideADRIFT Spring Competition is open for any unreleased, but complete, Adrift games. Competition entries must be in by 17 April 2005 with judging taking place in the following 2 weeks.

InsideADRIFT Spring Competition 2005

The rules for the next InsideADRIFT competition are up now on the website.

Background

The InsideADRIFT Spring Competition is open for any unreleased, but complete, Adrift games. Competition entries must be in by 17 April 2005 with judging taking place in the following 2 weeks.

Prizes

3 to 6 entries

1st prize will be forty US dollars

2nd prize will be twenty five US dollars

7 entries or more

1st prize of fifty US dollars

2nd prize of thirty US dollars

3rd prize of twenty US dollars

More details at

http://www.insideadrift.org.uk/e107/e107_plugins/custompages/comp_sprin_o5.php

Spring Thing 2005

The competitions rules are now posted up and everything is set for take off.

There has been a rule change with the upper limit on the number of entries that will be accepted being removed.

One Room Game Competition 2005 underway

Francesco Cordella posted on RAIF (rec.arts.int-fiction newsgroup) to announce the launch of this competition for all IF languages. It is the third edition of the Comp organized by www.avventuretestuali.com and reserved to one room interactive fiction games written in any language and programming language.

Rules, deadlines, prizes etc. are here:

http://www.avventuretestuali.com/orgc/orgc2005_eng.html

Forum news

Major changes ahead on the forum. Campbell Wild has appointed Mystery and KF to be super administrators, with the power to make changes to the forums and to act as his representatives in sorting out any non-technical problems on the forum.

Unfortunately, virtually as soon as we received our new appointments, the whole ADRIFT server became unavailable, which meant we couldn't start work on developments.

InsideADRIFT Forums

The forums on the InsideADRIFT website have been reorganised in the hope that they will provide a refuge when the main ADRIFT site is out of action. Currently they are pretty much a desert, but the latest outage of the main forum confirms the need for alternative arrangements to be made.

The (big) idea by KF

Mimesis: is it that important?

There is so much talk of mimesis in interactive fiction, but is it over emphasised to the detriment of authors and players alike?

Definition: [n] the imitative representation of nature and human behaviour in art and literature

There is so much emphasis in modern discussion of IF about how everything talked about must be there to “avoid breaking mimesis”. When writing static fiction this is less of a problem, as the reader cannot decide to play with an object you just added for effect. In interactive fiction the author has the option of reducing objects in the game, and at the same time making the game less interesting, or they can make sure every tiny thing mentioned is backed up by a description.

In many ways the reduced object count takes us back towards the older IF style of the 1980s, where computer memory restrictions forced many compromises. This is also a type of game now looked back fondly on by players. Perhaps this is because modern games have become more interested in attempting to simulate the world, rather than make a game that is fun to play.

When you are playing a game, and a family member comes up to ask if you want a cup of tea, do you throw a tantrum because your mimesis has been wrecked? Sadly I have a feeling there are some who might, but most people would just answer, and then maybe return to their game.

While the following would be unacceptable to most, if not all game players, it illustrates where the problem arises.

Drifter's Toolbox

Pieces of software that may be of interest to drifters when they are developing their games. Reviewed here is a useful bit of software that is capable of producing high quality images, and eases the route to having figures in your graphics.

DAZ Studio reviewed by KF

Starting off with a piece taken from the DAZ website that gives an overview of the DAZ Studio project..

Join the DAZ|Studio program and help build a new cornerstone of digital image creation. DAZ|Studio is a free application supported solely by revenue generated from the sale of digital content (sold separately).

DAZ|Studio is a free software application that allows you to easily create beautiful digital art. You can use this software to load in people, animals, vehicles, buildings, props, and accessories to create digital scenes.

DAZ|Studio includes two pre-configured scenes ready for you to "Load & Render" within DAZ|Studio. Just double-click on the scene thumbnails inside of DAZ|Studio, and everything will come on screen posed, lit, and ready for you to create a stunning digital image.

The interface will be fairly standard for those who have used 3D packages, but I do feel it makes things simpler.

The scene below is supplied free with DAZ Studio, though the downloads are on the large side. It is a demonstration of just what can be done, the elements can be moved around individually in three dimensions before being rendered.



A large and imposing oak tree stands in the middle of the field.

> x oak tree

You see no such thing

Would be poor writing, how far down into the description of the tree is really needed. This sets the author the problem of trying to stop the player wanting to examine further, or risk the wrath of the mimesis police.

There is no right or wrong answer as to the depth of detail that should be implemented in a game, the genre and style of the game can dictate some of the level. Essentially if you describe a tree, others will want to examine the branch, twig, leaf, acorn and weevil within the acorn, and complain when they can't.

One of the main rules with writing is write for yourself, if you are satisfied with how you have written it, and have worked hard to make it as good as you can, you really shouldn't be overly concerned when some come along with different standards.

Apart from the usual menus and toolbars the most obvious area of the screen is the view window in the middle where you see what your scene will actually look like. All of the other windows can be moved around, or removed.

As can be seen at the bottom of the screen there is now a timeline, added since I produced the first version of this review for my *KF ADRIFT on the Web* site, which means that you can do stop go animation. A music file can also be added as a sound track to the animation.

I have now done a little work with the above scene, rotating it a little adjusting the viewing angle, changing the characters pose, and, where a tree trunk didn't quite work as it was too close, setting it to not visible. The scene was then rendered and is shown below untouched.



As always it should be noted that if you aren't an artist the results won't be brilliant. I am far from an artist and feel the results are perfectly acceptable, figures are always a nightmare normally, but that is where DAZ/Poser excel.

It is important to remember this is still BETA software and there are still bugs in it. Nevertheless it works pretty well. You have to understand that while the program is free, DAZ are hoping that once you have it you will buy extra content from them. It is expected that the first non-beta release will be out this year, and development has been fairly swift over the six months that I have been using this program.

Important extra news from DAZ

In 2005 DAZ have announced that you will be able to obtain their best selling Victoria 3 and Michael 3 figures for free. Previously they were available for \$39 each. These figures are used extensively within the Poser community and there are plenty of props, clothes and accessories available for them.

The DAZ site can be found at <http://www.daz3d.com/>

ADRIFT recent releases

Since the re-vamped ADRIFT site has changed the way things are displayed I may do similarly.

Ticket to No Where v1.1 (66 Kb, ticket.zip) By rotter, released Sun 2nd Jan 2005

In the race of life Colin never seems to even get on the starting blocks. Colin is a less than effective stationary salesman (pens, pencils etc). Broke Brothers his last big customer (in fact his only customer) are about to move to the opposition, Super Stationary. Stuck in the railway station from hell you must help Colin keep his job. [5th place in the Adrift Summer Comp 2004]

New rooms (DEMO) (1 Kb, 1_newrooms.taf) By KF, released Wed 15th Dec 2004

A fairly simple way of displaying the room description when you move the player to a random room.

Back To Life... Unfortunately [version 4] (74 Kb, backtolife.taf) By davidw, released Wed 15th Dec 2004

An ancient king is resurrected by his adoring populace... much to his dismay as he kind of liked being dead - lots of time to think, put your feet up and, best of all, no work. But now he's back, he's expected to do the job of ruling an empire which stretches across half the globe and is constantly at war with everyone. Time, he decides, he died again... [genre: comedy]

This is the recommended game for this issue. I have enjoyed playing it and think that it should appeal

Articles

The Retro Appeal by David Whyld

Mention the words "retro game" to a modern day IF player and you'll probably see them groan. When they think "retro game" they think "mazes" and "guess the verb" and "mimesis breaking" and "too hard" and "too big" and (let's face it) "rubbish".

It's no secret that retro games aren't very highly regarded by most of the modern day crowd. Why?

Mazes

It's a common misconception about the retro years that the games were infested with mazes. You started in a maze, solved it, found yourself in another maze, solved that and - lo and behold! - another maze!

Yet were that many of the retro games maze-infested to that degree? I don't remember that being the case. Admittedly my favourite game of the period - The Hobbit - did have a maze in it (and a particularly irritating one it was as well due to the goblins which appeared at random and threw you back into your cell every few moves) but I don't recall the retro period of IF games to have that many mazes. Out of every 100 retro games available at the IFArchive, I imagine less than 10% had a maze and most weren't overly difficult to complete once you got into the habit of drawing a map (a necessity back in the days when games often stretched to a couple hundred locations).

Of course, the old saying "once you've seen one, you've seen 'em all" certainly applies to mazes. Clever game designers might go out of their way to introduce new and inspired maze ideas but at the end of the day what you had was still a maze. There are only so many different ways you can design a game and though some might use some inspired ideas to make them appear different to the rest, they were all the same basic maze.

As an aside, one irony about mazes that never fails to amuse me is the way quite a lot of the modern crowd hold up a game like Zork as one of the few games of the retro years they are prepared to accept was brilliant. Yet didn't Zork have a maze? I wonder what the reaction from the modern crowd would be if a new game every bit good as Zork came out today. Probably "it's got a maze so it must be awful!"

Guess The Verb

Another cited reason for just why the retro gaming period was considered such a washout. But then the same criteria could be applied to the current gaming period as well and I certainly finished more games back in the 80's than I do now. Generally when I finished a retro game it was through sheer persistence and more than a little luck (this being back in the days of yore before the internet came along and people posted walkthroughs on websites or forums; if you got stuck, you could always write to a computer magazine but the delay between writing to one of them and actually getting your letter published and being told what to do (if that ever happened at all) was such that you were often better off trying to finish the game on your own than asking for help.) When I finish a game now, it's usually because I've either found the walkthrough happily posted on the internet, asked for help or (in the case of many ADRIFT games) cheated and looked in the Generator to find out what I needed to do.

So was the dreaded guess the verb more prevalent in the retro years than it is now? I don't think so. Show me a retro game with guess the verb and I'll show

to a wide audience.**Darkness V1.05 (26 Kb, darkness.zip) By rotter, released Tue 14th Dec 2004**

For the first time in living memory, the lighthouse on the Croxton Rock was in darkness. First on the scene, you discover an empty lighthouse and a missing crew. It is now up to you to discover the truth. [6th in InsideADRIFT Game of the Year Comp 2004]

A Day In The Life Of A Super Hero (162 Kb, superhero.taf) By davidw, released Tue 14th Dec 2004

The fiendish Tax Collector and his gang of cronies are threatening the city and only YOU - the fabled Masked Defender - can stop him! [genre: super hero]

Door and NPC (DEMO) (1 Kb, door2.taf) By Mystery, released Wed 1st Dec 2004

This demonstrates how to be able to go through a door once it is unlocked. It also displays the next room and the NPC's that are there.

The Three-Hour Games Competition (223 Kb, 3hourcompetition.zip) By various authors, released Tue 23rd Nov 2004

"This package contains the six entries in The Three-Hour Games Competition, with a judging form. Each author has completed their game in three hours or less.

Please play the games, and judge by completing the enclosed judging form and sending it to woodfish5@hotmail.com by Tuesday 7th December 2004. Enjoy!"

The Magic Show (102 Kb, magicshow.zip) By Jason MacInnes, released Sun 21st Nov 2004

"A skilled magician, you expect it'll just be another night working at the dinner theatre. Or so the evening begins as you head out

you two modern games that suffer from the same problem.

Mimesis Breaking

Who gives a hoot? Seriously.

Mimesis breaking seems to be a phrase thrown around so often these days that you'd think some people only play IF because it gives them something to complain about. The idea that you can ever forget you're playing a game and be completely immersed in the game world is pretty ridiculous and yet the least indication in the game that it's a game you're playing and not something that's really happening has people up in arms. They go from one extreme to another in pointing out why such-and-such a game breaks mimesis and seem to go into almost paroxysms of rage at the very idea of it. One amusing post I read on RAIF once criticised a game in which the player checked his e-mail the moment he woke up - "but isn't that breaking mimesis to suggest that someone checks their e-mail the moment they wake up?" cried the anguished poster. Earth to poster: you really need to get out more. It's a game for crying out loud!

Every day I expect to read a post on RAIF from someone saying that they had to type commands into a game and that broke mimesis to such a degree they couldn't bear to continue playing.

Here's a shock revelation: mimesis isn't that important. It's not completely irrelevant and sometimes a game which continually breaks mimesis can be annoying, if not downright frustrating, but it's not that big a deal. Try playing a game with the knowledge foremost in your mind that it is a game and see if you can make it through to the end without worrying over mimesis.

Too Hard

Another criticism that could be leveled at modern day IF.

Were the games of yesteryear too hard? It probably depends on your definition of "too hard" but yes, a lot of them were difficult to say the least. But then this was the age of commercial text adventures and when you spent a week or a month's pocket money on a game you didn't want to finish it in an hour so games were hard by necessity. After all, if you bought a game today for £10 wouldn't you be a bit miffed to finish it an hour later? Bit of a waste of money if you ask me.

But were the games unfairly hard? I wouldn't have said so. Most were solvable if you spent enough time and effort on them and the satisfaction at finally finishing a game after months of struggling with it, particularly a game you had spent your hard earned cash on, was immensely satisfying.

Too Big

The preference these days seems to be for small games, games you can finish in an hour or two. "Big" games are considered those that might take you five hours to complete; "huge" games could take ten hours. The modern crowd experience severe depression at the idea of games bigger than "huge".

Most retro games took tens of hours to complete.

The lack of patience from quite a few modern day IF players has always struck me as a strange thing. Do they genuinely have so little free time that if they can't finish a game in an hour then they'll perhaps die of old age before they get round to finishing it?* What about saving the game position and trying again at another time? Or is the game so forgettable that once you stop playing for a day or so it's impossible to remember what happened the previous time so there's no point in playing it again if you didn't finish it the first time? Make a transcript.

onto the stage to perform your usual feats of magic. But the night will be longer than you think and your magical skills will become a matter of life and death."

InsideADRIFT Merchandise

Although this is not intended as a money spinning idea, more a way to create items for me, these items are available for the discerning drifter to purchase.



The mug, priced at \$11.39, has a crisp copy of the new magazine logo. It is large enough for those beverages needed to keep you going through long creative sessions.



Costing \$17.39, the baseball jersey comes in red/.blue/black and white.

Also available from www.cafepress.com/insideadrift are: sweatshirt \$21.99; mousepad \$10.99; teddy bear \$13.49; sticker \$2.49.

Yet they manage lengthy posts on a daily basis on the RAIF/RGIF message boards so it clearly can't be a question of not enough time. Maybe they have the time but just don't use it wisely...

Me, I like big games. I like games I can play on and off for weeks, months or even years. I feel that if I play a game and I've finished it an hour later that the sheer amount of time and effort that must have gone into writing the game was a wasted opportunity. How long did the author spend writing the game? Four months? Six? A year? And then someone comes along and finishes it in an hour. What a waste.

Not to mention the fact that a game which takes you a year to solve is likely to hold fonder memories for you than one that takes an hour. I have fond memories of a couple dozen retro games yet very few modern ones and it's doubtful, though some of the modern games are excellent in their own right, that I'll have fond memories of them in twenty years time. I'll still remember some of the retro games though.

Rubbish

As to whether retro games are rubbish is pretty much down to the individual but the best of them were easily as good as the best of today's games. Of course, how good anything is down to what you, personally, think is good. Most modern gamers think that Photopia is the best thing since sliced bread. I didn't like it. I preferred The Big Sleaze but the modern crowd would probably get two minutes into it before they died of a sudden case of broken mimesis. It's a matter of taste. Casually saying that all retro games are rubbish is a pretty silly statement to make.

* * * * *

So why is it that retro games are held in such poor regard by modern IF players? Most of the problems attributed to them - mazes, guess the verb, mimesis breaking, too hard, too big, rubbish - can either be attributed to modern day games as well or just aren't that big a deal. Part of me suspects the problem might be that there are so many free games readily available on the internet that people these days just aren't willing to give a game a fair chance. They'll try a retro game out of interest or novelty value, run into a problem with it after five minutes, and immediately quit. The fact that the game is free just means that they haven't wasted any of their money on it and there are so many other free games out there that they have the choice to pick something different.

But for those of us with the patience to make a proper effort to play a retro game, they can be surprisingly good. Better, even, than the more modern games. Try one sometime. You might even like it.

Stop procrastinating and write that game by Lumin

I originally meant this article to be about the “art” of writing. You know, like clarity in descriptions, how to know when you should give the adverbs and adjectives a rest, and things like that. Then I figured, well heck, most of the people who are going to be reading this have already got the basics figured out, or at least a good enough grasp of the English language to write a playable game if they choose to do so. So, while I may have an article on writing here next time around, for now I’ll focus on a different kind of writing topic, one that seems to me to be a bigger issue facing the Adrift community; that whole “if they choose to do so,” part. You know, actually *writing*.

There’s a quote by Dorothy Sayers I really like. She says, “The art of writing is in applying the ass to the chair.” Of course, she said that back when writing meant using a typewriter, and not having the Internet and countless other distractions at your fingertips at the same time. Nowadays people *like* sitting in a chair. Probably like it a little too much for their own good, in fact.

Even so, her point continues to apply today. Writing takes some willpower. There’re millions of things you could be doing instead that are more fun, less work, or simply seem more important at the time. That last one is especially a problem since it’s the only one that’s not just an excuse; for most of us writing is just a hobby, something that’s never going to see a monetary return, and things like work or school of course take priority. (Oh yeah, and there’s that whole “family” thing. They’re sort of important, too, or at least they kick up a fuss when you ignore them)

But if you’re reading this, chances are you’ve either written a few games already, or at least decided that writing one is something you’d like to do. The first step in the process is of course coming up with an idea, but that alone doesn’t mean much. Lots of people have ideas, but very few actually *do* anything with them. Right now, a decent game with clichéd plot would probably do the community a much greater service than the greatest, most original game in the world that was never actually finished.

Actually, trying to write “the greatest, most original game” ever may be the surest way to kill a project before you even get a third of the way through. Believe me, I’ve been there. It’s the trap we all fall into; we want *more* content, *more* puzzles, *more* innovations, *more* realism, more, more, more! It’s easy to get mired in the details, spending weeks and weeks on every imaginable thing without ever really getting the game any closer to completion. And as the project becomes more and more complex, ninety percent of the time we get fed up with the whole thing and lose any desire to keep working towards what seems an impossible goal.

Wouldn’t it be preferable to complete a basic game first? And then if you feel the need to experiment with the puzzles or flesh the story out afterwards, you’ve at least got a solid foundation to work from, instead of pouring all your effort into a shiny coat of polish that in the end is useless without something playable to put it on. Don’t get me wrong, it’s fine to set high goals for yourself, but be realistic; not everyone is Shakespeare, and the great thing is you don’t <l>have</l> to be to write an enjoyable game.

Besides burning out from trying to do too much, the next biggest hang-up can be doing too <l>little</l>. All of us have lives outside of Adrift, and it’s hard

enough finding a good chunk of time to play a game, let alone write one. It can be incredibly difficult to stay motivated on a project you may only think about for half an hour a week, and the longer you're away the easier it is to forget about it and go on to other things.

Just like static fiction, the key to writing IF is consistency. Write every day. Even if it's only for five minutes, and even if you don't feel like it and have to force yourself. Eventually it will become a habit, but most importantly it will keep you focused. Heck, even if you only write one task or create one object a night, you're still making more progress than you would have been otherwise. If you're at work or school and don't have access to Adrift, fire up plain ol' Notepad and write a couple of room descriptions. Carry a spiral notebook with you and jot down notes or pieces of maps. Make an outline of the plot. When you first conceive of your brilliant idea, writing it down can be indispensable as it lets you refresh your memory farther down the road.

So I challenge you right now, as soon as you finish reading this newsletter, shut the window down and work on a game. Don't check your e-mail, don't go get a snack, don't check to see if the forum's back up yet, just *write*.

And yes, I realize a person who has yet to complete a game may not be the best one to give this advice, but you see, I have so many *ideas*...

Reference

Now onto a very important part of writing an ADRIFT game, overriding the system commands with your own tasks. This has proved to be a real stumbling block for many of us, so this short piece of the manual is one that may help many.

Overriding System Commands

The vast majority of all the **system commands** (i.e. commands that ADRIFT understands without having to explicitly define tasks for, such as getting and dropping objects) can all be overridden with your own tasks. This is necessary to allow you to customise the adventure and do more advanced things. To override the system commands, simply create a task with a command which would normally be understood by the parser

One example where this is useful is if you have a fragile object such as a vase. If you type "drop vase", then the default system command moves the object to the current room the Player is in. You may want to make the object break if the Player tries to drop it, so you would define a task such as "drop * vase", then give the reply "You drop the fragile vase, but it smashes on impact with the ground.", then move the object to hidden.

The difficulty with overriding the system commands is to cover all possible ways that it can be phrased. In the example above, if that were the only definition in the task and if the player typed "put vase down", the vase would still be moved to the current room instead of the task running.

Overriding the standard commands for taking and dropping objects are slightly different from other commands. The reason for this is in case the player types “take all” or “drop all”. You would then want all objects in the room to be taken (or dropped) with the exception of whichever ones you’ve defined tasks for. You would then want the task to run for these. To enable this to work efficiently, you must define the task as simply “**get** * <object>” (formatted for your particular circumstance), or “**drop** * <object>”. You don’t have to worry about synonyms for get and drop as ADRIFT will automatically cater for these, but it is essential to use these keywords.

If you have defined a task that overrides a system command and the task fails because a restriction is not met, then one of two things will happen:

If you have put a message in the **else display** part of the restriction, this will be displayed and the system command will be overridden.

If the **else display** message is blank, the system command will execute normally.

NB. If a task successfully matches a player command but has no output text, it will still execute as per normal, but instead of bypassing the normal response to the command, it will continue to be executed as if not being overridden by the task at all.

© Campbell Wild, Oct 2003

Information is copied and pasted from the manual and while every effort is made to be accurate, there are no guarantees that it is error free

ADRIFT Wordsearch Puzzle

Drifting Authors and Games

U M F S R F G F A Q E D A W W
 J A S F O L G Q N O D L N H N
 O G K S B M Y S T E R Y K E C
 T I C K E T T O N O W H E R E
 P C M A R N K P R M G W Q E R
 A S A H T O K L P V Y D L A U
 I H W Q O D T R J X M I B R O
 N O S X G I Z T A P O V W E H
 T W I X R X I R E D Y A U M T
 T E H J A M F W Q R S D G Y S
 U S F F S H S I F D O O W K A
 C H O O S E Y O U R O W N E L
 G T E R I C M A Y E R I P Y F
 Y R O M E M F O S D R A H S R
 S E N N I C A M N O S A J H L

All you have to do is spot the names and games list below in the the puzzle above here.

CHOOSE YOUR OWN
 DARKNESS
 DAVID WHYLD
 ERIC MAYER
 JASON MACINNES
 LAST HOUR
 MAGIC SHOW
 MYSTERY
 PAINT
 ROBERTO GRASSI
 ROTTER
 SHARDS OF MEMORY
 TICKET TO NOWHERE
 WHERE ARE MY KEYS
 WOODFISH

© 2004 Edited by KF.

Please send any contributions or suggestions to kf@kfadrift.org.uk.