Infinite Worlds . . . Infinite Adventure!

The good news is, there are other Earths. Maybe an infinite number. The bad news is, somebody out there doesn’t like us.

Welcome to the core setting of GURPS Fourth Edition! Every other GURPS setting is on one of the Infinite Worlds timelines . . . whether they know it or not! GMs can use this to create a whole meta-campaign, or just as an excuse to move characters between worlds when the plot requires it.

Compiled by Kenneth Hite, the master of alternate histories, GURPS Infinite Worlds combines and updates material from GURPS Time Travel, GURPS Alternate Earths, and GURPS Alternate Earths 2 into one volume, and has dozens of new worlds to explore as well! This is the complete genre book on both alternative-world gaming and time travel. It also provides a wide variety of suitable threats and hazards -- from evil cross-time Nazis and cosmic conspiracies to “ordinary” monsters and disasters.

Whether you’re playing accidental travelers or the hardened troops of the Infinity Patrol, this book is your gateway to adventure. Infinite adventure.

This PDF is an electronic copy of the first printed edition of GURPS Infinite Worlds. All known errata to that edition have been corrected, as of the publication date of March 10, 2006.
The good news is, we can visit other Earths. The bad news is, somebody out there doesn't like us.

The shuttles of Infinity Unlimited jump between parallel Earths, seeking profit, knowledge, and adventure. But a parallel called Centrum also has the technology to cross between worlds . . . and they want to rule them all. The Infinity Patrol must deal with these ruthless rivals, as well as with world-jumping criminals, and try to keep the secret of dimension travel out of the hands of the really nasty alternate worlds like Reich-5.

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This book describes the Infinite Worlds, the “standard setting” for GURPS Fourth Edition. Here, history varied on other Earths; the Union Jack flutters over America, Mongol ponies graze in Britain, and zeppelins float unperturbed everywhere. The heroic Infinity Patrol, licensed by the corporation that discovered parachronic travel, keeps Homeline safe and improves life where it can. Between crosstime plagues, samurai with force swords, and unpredictable storms that blow people to other worlds, its work never ends.

Any kind of campaign, on any kind of world, fits here – in fact, it’s already here somewhere! You don’t have to play the Patrol or even obey them. You can steal alternate Monets, hunt werewolves in medieval Germany, or seek the Holy Grail across the worlds. You can treat this book like your own personal alternate Spanish Main and loot it for goodies and excitement to carry back to your own game world. You can even build a game world – an infinity of them – from scratch, using this book’s alternate Earth design systems and advice.

It’s only a short jump (as it were) from alternate histories to time travel. Time travel stories often become alternate Earth stories, as the plucky traveler wrenches history from its appointed course to save his adopted hometown in the past. Hence, this book also contains complete guidelines for time travel, keeps Homeline safe and unpertrubed everywhere. The heroic Infinity Patrol, licensed by the corporation that discovered parachronic travel, keeps Homeline safe and improves life where it can. Between crosstime plagues, samurai with force swords, and unpredictable storms that blow people to other worlds, its work never ends.

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History is not merely what happened: it is what happened in the context of what might have happened. Therefore it must incorporate, as a necessary element, the alternatives, the might-have-beens.

– Sir Hugh Trevor-Roper, “History and Imagination”

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Kenneth Hite

On a close parallel Earth, Kenneth Hite’s first RPG publication credit was GURPS Alternate Earths. In all Earths he can access, he co-wrote that book and its sequel for Steve Jackson Games, as well as writing GURPS Cabal and the third edition of GURPS Horror, and compiling and co-authoring GURPS WWII: Weird War Two. His “Suppressed Transmission” column covers high strangeness for Pyramid magazine; on some Earths it is called “Thirteen O’Clock High.” On the most terrifying worldlines, it has been collected in two volumes to date.

He lives with his wife Sheila in Chicago, the center of all worlds worth visiting. In no Earth has his M.A. in International Relations proved at all useful, but one never knows.

Steve Jackson

Steve Jackson has been devouring time-travel and parallel-world science fiction since he was about seven years old, and jumped at the chance to inflict his own contribution on the field.

He is the founder and editor-in-chief of Steve Jackson Games, but, as shown by the present book, still gets to write something once in a while. He hopes to do it again someday.

Steve lives in Austin. He enjoys SF conventions, gardening, the Web, tropical fish, Lego, and – oh, yes – gaming.

John M. Ford

John M. Ford is the author of nine novels (so far), including the alternate history The Dragon Waiting. On the gaming front, he has done work for GDW, West End Games, and Steve Jackson Games. If he survives to finish his next novel, he’ll probably write an opera. With roleplaying in it. Somebody has to be the first.

PUBLICATION HISTORY

Much of the background in this book was drawn from the Third Edition books GURPS Time Travel and the two volumes of GURPS Alternate Earths.

The Origins Award-winning Time Travel was a collaboration between Steve Jackson and Mike Ford. Steve sketched out a parallel-world setting that owes a great deal to the works of H. Beam Piper. Mike fleshed it out with high-quality rubber science and added the whole “Time Corps” background, cut from whole cloth woven on the loom of Fritz Leiber. They respectfully acknowledge Those Who Went Before, and only wish they could go back and shake their hands.

David Pulver recast the material in Time Travel and other GURPS books for Fourth Edition, after which Kenneth Hite added yet more background, rearranged all the puzzle pieces, and fit the entire assemblage between two covers.
“. . . to preserve and defend The Secret with my last breath.”

As Angela finished the oath, she felt something – just the weight of all those histories – settle on her shoulders. Before she could absorb the feeling, it was gone, jarred loose by a man shaking her elbow. “Agent Polk,” he began, Angela unconsciously looked around to see whom he was talking to, but then realized that as of 30 seconds ago, she was “Agent Polk,” and would be until, she supposed, her “last breath.”

“Agent Polk,” he said again, “let’s walk and talk.” “But my family – they’re here to see the ceremony . . .”

“And apparently, we’re not going to Haussman-2 for the dancing, since Suleiman here was number one in our class in bladed weapons.” The Turk she didn’t recognize flashed her a quick smile and went back to adjusting his boots.

Nobody smiled for the next five minutes, as the ornithopter jolted and shuddered sickeningly. “Parachronic transition – the wings just caught hold,” Carlo said. More jolts banged the craft around, and Tranh began “I don’t think that’s just the wings . . .” just as a bullet-hole appeared in the hull above Suleiman’s head.

Angela and Carlo dove for the cockpit; even as the ornithopter jolted and spun with the deck. Angela was first by a fraction and grabbed the yoke, wrestling the ‘thopter back into level flight. Carlo was yammering something in her ear, but she was too busy keeping them from crashing to pay attention. Only after the aircraft had juddered back to something like normal did she look around and notice the dead man on the bench beside her. “I wonder what our mission was supposed to – ” Angela began, but Carlo cut her off. “I think,” he said tightly, “we’re about to find out.”

Three more ornithopters – these painted an ominous gray – appeared in the windscreen, and the flashes from their muzzles started the ship jolting and tilting again, spiraling down toward the parallel Lake Superior below them.
Thirty years ago, former Dartmouth physicist Paul Van Zandt changed the world. Actually, he changed hundreds of them. He invented a parachronic projector, a machine that could send matter into another dimension — another timeline. The first world he discovered was “Earth-Beta,” almost identical to his own world, which he dubbed “Homeline.” But as he improved his technology and his survey techniques, he began to discover worlds where Rome never fell, or where America was a feudal kingdom. Some worlds — those on the same “quantum level” as Homeline, Quantum 5 (Q5) — were easy to reach. Others, on Q4 and Q6, were slightly harder; Quantum 3 and Quantum 7 were downright difficult. However, Van Zandt persevered, and built up a small team of daring assistants who helped him map 23 more universes.

He funded further research with profits from trading between worlds, an undertaking he formalized with White Star Trading. In 1998, Van Zandt revealed his discovery of parachronic travel to the public, and revealed a secret to the U.N. Security Council. Whatever the secret was (p. B525), it halted demands for his technology to be nationalized, militarized, or destroyed. Instead, the Security Council established the United Nations Interworld Council (UNIC) from its own membership, which chartered a new corporation, Infinity Unlimited (often shortened to “Infinity” by the media). Van Zandt became CEO of Infinity, and UNIC added its own bureaucrats to the board. The Interworld Treaty, which chartered Infinity, required that Infinity work to “better the lot” of the other worlds it explored and exploited. To that end — and possibly to counter the threat Van Zandt revealed to the Security Council — Van Zandt created the Infinity Patrol.

**Infinite Worlds Glossary**

alternate: Any timeline except the original Earth. Also “alternate world.”

anchor: An echo that does not experience a quantum shift when “history is changed.”

Armanen Order: The secret order in Reich-5’s SS that has discovered parachronics.

autochrones: Natives of a timeline, as opposed to out-time visitors or colonists; called “chrones” and “locals” in Patrol slang.

banestorm: A natural phenomenon that moves living beings between worlds.

Cabal, the: A secret organization of magicians and monsters using magical dimension travel.

Centrum: A rival civilization with the ability to travel between worlds. A “Centran” is a native or agent of Centrum.

cliodynamics: The scientific study of historical change, especially useful for altering histories in a desired direction.

conveyor: A self-propelled device for traveling between alternate worlds.

*Continued on next page . . .*
**Infinite Worlds Glossary (Continued)**

**Coventry:** An alternate world maintained by the Infinity Patrol as a prison for those – both Homeliners and outtimers – who Know Too Much.

**dimensional highway:** A road between worlds, natural, magical, or artificial.

**echo:** An alternate world which is – or appears to be – identical to ours, but at an earlier point in its history.

**Eraser:** A memory-affecting drug used by I-Cops and others to keep The Secret of parachronic travel.

**Eyes, the:** Patrol slang for Internal Affairs.

**hell parallel:** A worldline mostly or entirely emptied of humanity by a disaster or holocaust.

**homeboy:** In Patrol slang, anybody from one's own world of origin.

**Homeline:** The original Earth of Paul Van Zandt and the Infinity Patrol.

**I-Cop:** An agent of the Infinity Patrol's Intervention Service.

**Infinity Patrol:** The paramilitary arm of Infinity Unlimited.

**Infinity Unlimited:** Often just "Infinity"; private corporation that controls parachronic technology as a monopoly and governs access to alternate timelines.

**Interworld Service:** Also I.S., or “Interworld,” the Centran equivalent to the Infinity Patrol.

**Kern:** From the German for “kernel,” a safe-house used by Armanen Order operatives. Plural: Kerne.

**local:** In Patrol slang, native to the timeline.

**memetics:** The study of ideas and their transmission and change, a back-formation from “genetics.” Not yet fully accepted as a science.

**Mule:** Armanen Order slang for a world-jumper, especially one created artificially by Nazi science.

**Nexer:** A Patrol agent from the Nexus Oversight Division.

**nexus portal:** A “natural” path between alternate worlds.

**oneliner:** Someone who never leaves his home timeline, especially a Homeline “civilian.”

**Outstair:** Patrol slang for Homeline higher-ups. “Those dimwits Outstairs expect us to stop the Visigoths with nothing but Scotch tape and puppet shows.”

**outtime:** A world other than the speaker's own; usually means any other world besides Homeline.

**outtimer:** Anyone from a different world from the speaker; hence, a Patrol agent is an “outtimer” on Caliph, but a citizen of Caliph would be an “outtimer” on Homeline.

**parachronics:** The study of alternate worlds. More specifically, the study of why alternate worlds exist, and how travel between them is possible.

**parachronozoid:** A creature with a natural world-jumping ability.

**parallel:** An alternate world that differs from ours only in that its history has been different (some are very different). A “close parallel” is different as the result of one identifiable historical change.

**Pile, the:** Patrol Headquarters.

**portal dimension:** A location that connects to many (or even all) alternate worlds or dimensions.

**projector:** A device that can send a conveyor across quanta.

**quantum:** An “energy level” in 8-dimensional space that contains many alternate timelines. Quantum levels are often abbreviated; e.g., Q7 for Quantum 7.

**quantum sargasso:** A worldline that cannot be left using parachronics.

**reality quake:** A parachronic upheaval that buries some or all of an alternate's history beneath a new one.

**reality shard:** A fragment of a previous past thrown up by a reality quake.

**Reality Vanish:** The worldline that supposedly "eats" vanished probes and missions.

**Scout:** An agent of the Infinity Patrol's Penetration Service.

**The Secret:** The fact that technological crossworld travel is possible. Outtimers are not supposed to learn this, unless recruited by Infinity. Interworld doesn’t bother keeping The Secret on primitive worlds.

**shiftrealm:** A location that travels between worldlines, from "ghost ships" to whole forests or islands.

**skerry:** A collection of nearby timelines sharing a common element (i.e., an ongoing WWII, a basis in the fiction of Robert Heinlein).

**swagman:** A member of a loose fraternity of crosstime grifters.

**timeline:** Another term for an alternate world.

**trod:** A magical dimensional highway, usually used by faeries. Most trods run between forests.

**UNIC:** United Nations Interworld Council, the U.N. body officially charged with overseeing parachronics and Infinity.

**vanish it:** Literally, “send it to a nonexistent reality”; Patrol slang expression meaning, roughly, “to Hell with it.”

**weird parallel:** An alternate world that has many similarities to our own, but also has differences that make these similarities seem unbelievable (such as the world where intelligent reptiles speak English).

**zero point:** The term for a location that has been “zeroed” – properly calibrated – for a safe conveyor jump between two specific dimensions.
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