

GURPS

Fourth Edition

Traveller

PSIONICS INSTITUTES



An e23 Sourcebook for GURPS® Traveller® from Steve Jackson Games
Based on the award-winning Traveller science fiction universe by MARC MILLER

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INTRODUCTION

The official *Traveller* setting has two basic approaches to psionic powers: the Third Imperium and its allied client states officially suppress them, but secretly support psionic training institutes and the undercover use of psions. The Zhodani Consulate and its allied clients embrace psi powers, and promote psions to the highest levels of

their government. *Psionics Institutes* enables *Traveller* players and gamemasters to explore both approaches in their games, in greater detail than ever before. The book covers the institutes and types of institutional training available in both the Consulate and Imperium, as well as character templates and character creation information. It gives several sample

institutes, as well as psi-using corporations, mercenary units, and psi-friendly societies, worlds, and government agencies. Underground pro-psi societies (both within and outside the Imperium) are detailed. Using *Psionics Institutes*, players and game masters can add a sixth sense to their campaign.

ABOUT THE CREATORS

Amanda Dickerson has played *Traveller* for years, and *GURPS Psionics* for much longer than that. After several articles she wrote for the *Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society* were published, she moved on to roleplaying books. Her first book, *Dead Sea Murder*, is a complete RPG campaign for the *FUDGE Terra Incognita* game. More information is available from her website at www.angelfire.com/md/meadowlark.

Amanda lives in Ohio with her husband. Together they care for a dog (who apparently suffers from attention deficit disorder) and three cats (who have yet to find an earthly use for the dog). Her lifelong interest in the paranormal led to her hobbies of tarot reading, magick, and psychic research. Her obsession with the latter finally found an outlet in this book.

Loren Wiseman has worked with *Traveller* in all its forms since the game's creation in 1977. He is currently *GURPS Traveller* line editor for SJ Games, and editor for the *Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society*, and was recently inducted into the Academy of Adventure Gaming Arts and Design's Hall of Fame.

The image shows a screenshot of a web browser displaying the website for the Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society. The browser's address bar shows the URL <http://jtas.sjgames.com/>. The website has a dark background with a light-colored sidebar on the left containing links: About JTAS, Subscribe, Login, Sample Issue, Advertising, Writing for Us, and Feedback. The main content area features the title "Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society" and a paragraph of text: "The Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society is the official online magazine of Traveller. Each bi-weekly update includes news and articles; new Traveller material will be reviewed as it appears. JTAS supports all versions of Traveller and welcomes reader participation as we keep the flame of Traveller alive and burning brighter!"

For several years, Steve Jackson Games has published the *Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society* located online at jtas.sjgames.com/. In addition to the current issue, subscribers can access the extensive archive of previous articles. From the JTAS website subscribers can talk with each other, guest speakers, and the staff in Brubek's, the live internet chat room, or using the online discussion boards.

ABOUT GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of *GURPS* players. Our address is SJ Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! We can also be

reached by e-mail: info@sjgames.com. Resources include:

Pyramid (www.sjgames.com/pyramid/). Our online magazine includes new *GURPS* rules and articles. It also covers the *d20* system, *Ars Magica*, *BESM*, *Call of Cthulhu*, and

many more top games – and other Steve Jackson Games releases like *Illuminati*, *Car Wars*, *Transhuman Space*, and more. *Pyramid* subscribers also get opportunities to playtest new *GURPS* books!

New supplements and adventures. **GURPS** continues to grow, and we'll be happy to let you know what's new. For a current catalog, send us a legal-sized SASE, or just visit www.warehouse23.com.

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PAGE REFERENCES

GURPS Compendium I lists all the title abbreviations for **GURPS** titles.

Wherever a page reference includes a GT, it refers to a page in **GURPS Traveller**; e.g., p. GT54 refers to page 54 of **GURPS Traveller**. P refers to **Psionics**, B to the **Basic Set**, T:AI to **Traveller: Alien Races 1**, T:FT to **Traveller: Far Trader**, T:GF to **Traveller: Ground Forces**, T:RF to **Traveller: Rim of Fire**, T:SM to **Traveller: Star Mercs** and T:ST to **Traveller: Starports**.

RESOURCES

The foundation for every **GURPS Traveller** campaign builds on the information in **GURPS Basic Set**, **GURPS Compendium I**, and **GURPS Traveller**.

The following are recommended: **GURPS Traveller: Alien Races 1** includes information on the psionically gifted Zhodani race and the initial detailed look at psionics in the **Traveller** universe. **GURPS Psionics** is the complete resource for creating and playing psionic characters.

Additional useful resources: **GURPS Traveller: Rim of Fire** discusses the Imperium's psionics institutes and the psionically empowered society on the Red Zone planet Heironymus. Depending on the type of campaign, **GURPS Traveller: Star Mercs**, **GURPS Traveller: Starports**, **GURPS Traveller: Ground Forces**, or **GURPS Traveller: Far Trader** may be useful.

For inspiration from fiction, there are many psi-themed SF novels to choose from. This brief list is a good starting point:

A Thousand Words For Stranger, Julie E. Czerneda.

Mind Game, Christine Feehan.

Shadow Game, Christine Feehan.

Mind of My Mind, Octavia E. Butler.

Kinsman's Oath, Susan Krinard.

Forge of the Titans, Steve White.

TNT: Telzey and Trigger, James H. Schmitz.

Gates of Hell, Susan Sizemore.

The Stars My Destination Aka Tiger! Tiger!, Alfred Bester.

Additionally, these series are recommended:

The *Pegasus* Series, Anne McCaffrey.

The *Rowan* Series, Anne McCaffrey.

The *Darkover* Series, Marion Zimmer Bradley.

The *Commonwealth* series, Alan Dean Foster.

And several novels of the *Babylon 5* series.



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CHAPTER ONE

FINDING A PSIONICS INSTITUTE

Finding a psionics institute depends on who you are, where you are, and what year it is. Children of the psionically gifted Zhodani noble and indentant classes (see p. GT 78-80) begin psionics training soon after they learn to speak and receive a comprehensive psionics curriculum in their schools. Although average Zhodani citizens (called proles) may possess latent psionic abilities, they do not receive training. Upward mobility is possible for prole children who demonstrate considerable psionic aptitude during standard testing. These fortunate few are adopted into an indentant family, and with that comes all the rights and responsibilities of that class.

Even within the Imperium prior to the PsionicSuppressions (800 to 826), finding an institute for psionics was no more challenging than locating any mundane college. During the Suppressions, institutes lost their charters and their

leaders were imprisoned. Whole families faced persecution and many fled to more sympathetic worlds outside the Imperium or to the Zhodani Consulate. The psions that remained in the Imperium went underground, changing their names, their occupations, and living double lives. In the nearly 300 years since, the use of psionics has remained ostensibly illegal and psionics institutes officially banned. However, the Imperium secretly established two psionics institutes of its own, disguising them as military installations, and continues the covert use of psions.

Worlds outside the Imperium and the Consulate vary from oppression to acceptance of psis, and everything in between.

A few isolated worlds within the Imperium developed cultures tolerant – or even supportive – of psionic abilities, despite the official ban on psionics.

These worlds are socially isolated (by choice or by tech level) from the Imperial community. In these cases, the Imperium often interdicts these systems, declaring them Red Zones.

The underground psionic community within the Imperium established many secret psionics institutes shortly after the end of the Suppressions. Citizens of the Imperium hear rumors of such facilities from time to time, but very few know where they are. Just as psions in the Imperium are searching for a place to learn and belong, the psionics institutes are searching for their next crop of students. The first of many challenges for a psion in the Imperium is to locate a psionics institute, a quest on which only the most persistent succeed (see p. GT:AR1 137). Those who fail must develop their talents in some other way – or not at all.

PRIMARY SOURCES

The first step is to find someone who knows where a psionics institute is located. Primary sources have direct knowledge either of an institute's location or how to contact its representatives.

IT RUNS IN THE FAMILY

Scientists believe there may be a genetic factor determining who has psi potential. The existence of families with several generations of psions is evidence that this is true. For those lucky enough to be born into one of these bloodlines,

the matter of finding a psionics institute to attend is vastly simplified.

Traditionally, youngsters attend the alma mater of their gifted relative. Like-minded institutes pool resources so their students and graduates are aware of some of the other programs. Children of psionic families in the Imperium are sheltered from the hostilities faced by most psions. They are encouraged from a young age to discover and develop their unique capabilities, and trained in hiding their talents from their persecutors.

The most powerful and prestigious families are known in the psionics

community as *kites*. Kites created the first post-Suppressions psionics institutes and they remain one of the central influences regarding curriculum, protocols, and policies. One or two kites generally dominate the board of directors of any given institute. It is common for most of the faculty of an institute to be related by blood or marriage to the controlling kites.

In less blessed families, a relative who is secretly psionic watches the younger generation for signs of psionic talents. That relative will approach such a child at the right moment to guide them toward one of the institutes.

CHAPTER TWO

PSIONICS

INSTITUTES

For creating and playing psionics characters, *GURPS Psionics* is the definitive roleplaying resource. *GURPS Traveller: Alien Races 1* includes an overview of psionics institutes and the nature of psionics in the *Traveller* game universe. This chapter builds on the foundation of those texts.

Psionic characters created for the *Traveller* universe must follow certain guidelines, which include accepting disadvantages in exchange for the advantage of psi (see p. GT84-85). Briefly, all psions begin with Social Stigma. To acquire psionic powers and skills a character must take a 10-point Unusual Background disadvantage. By increasing that to a 15-point Unusual Background, the psion can gain access to a psionics institute. All other psions must embark on a quest to locate one. Without psionics institute training, characters can only purchase latent powers limited to +1 – and they are unreliable at that. Additional psionic advantages, disadvantages, limitations, enhancements, and quirks are covered in detail in *GURPS Psionics*.

Once an institute has been located, a potential student must pay for the testing that will determine what powers (if any) he possesses. This testing is conducted over a period of two weeks and costs Cr5,000 (which may be refunded if the results are inconclusive). Details for

roleplaying this testing is provided in *GURPS Traveller: Alien Races 1*. Individuals with at least one psionic power at level 1 or greater can ask to attend the institute.

Institutes charge an additional Cr100,000 for the required four month training period. This price includes room and board. Students unable to pay for the training may arrange to work off the debt by performing certain “favors” for the institute.

Psi powers can be improved as long as a character already has at least one point. Psionic skills can be acquired and improved like any other skill, through experience or study (see p. B82). Students at the institutes train 14 hours a day. At that rate a character point is earned every two weeks. By the end of four months the newly train psion has earned eight character points for improving psionic powers or skills. Additional training with a qualified instructor adds one character point per 200 training hours. They can also be earned through self study at a rate of 400 hours per point. Later, if the psion used his powers on an intensive daily basis, he can gain an additional two and a half character points in that power or skill annually (see p. P8).

While attending the institute, a psion can focus on one or two specific skills or

spread his character points across several skills. Some psionic powers only offer a few skills, such as teleportation, which enables the psion to concentrate on them to reach a high level of power and skill. With the many skills available to telepaths, the psionics institute could provide training in several areas to give the psion a solid base on which to build with later experiences.

To roleplay psionics institute training, the personality of the institute comes into play. Some institutes (particularly mercenary, military, and some underground institutes) will focus their training primarily on combat applications. Others will allow the psion more freedom of choice. Instructors discuss the student’s power and skill options so the training can be tailored to his personal goals. For the player and game master, this means dedicating a solid two weeks of game time during training on a single skill for each point that it will be increased.

In addition to skills training, other dynamics can come into play during the four month training period. Student rivalries, Imperial raids, underground faction wars, gauntlets, psionics games, and training missions are just a few of the challenges adventurers may encounter during their stay at an institute. Every institute has its own personality, and that gives its students a different experience. The following sections explore more deeply the differences between various types of psionics institutes and what their students can expect.

The names and other details of all of the sample institutes contained here may be revised and adapted to suit an individual campaign. Many locations have been only been generally sketched in, to make it easier for a game master to fit them in where desired.



CHAPTER THREE

PSIONICS

WITHIN THE

IMPERIUM

Anti-psi prejudice is widespread within the Imperium, a side-effect of the PsionicSuppressions. While the use of psionics is illegal within the Imperium, to simply be psionic is not. What this means in practice is that psions must exercise extreme caution in using their talents. Untrained psions have little control when they (intentionally or unintentionally) use their gifts. These latents sometimes utilize their low level of ability in their daily lives without realizing it.

Once trained, even those who didn't intend to use their powers except in an emergency give in to temptation. After all, why should a teleporter spend an hour commuting to and from work when he can avoid the hassle with a blink of an eye? Why should a telepath wonder if the attractive woman across the bar is interested when he can sneak a "peek" and find out for sure? Such harmless indulgences can lead to greater offenses, and end in disaster.

Psions across the Imperium pursue employment based on their interests and skills just like ordinary citizens. Almost every field presents opportunities for

clever psions to exploit. This unfair advantage is one reason that psionics became illegal in the first place. Illegal or not, psions continue to secretly use their abilities to get ahead in their chosen professions. To minimize the chances of getting caught, they gravitate toward situations where they work alone or with a small and trusted group of comrades. Self-employment is another option.

The moment an individual uses his powers he becomes a criminal. In the Imperium (where prejudice still runs rampant) even being suspected of possessing psionic abilities is reason enough for dismissal from employment, eviction from living quarters, and justification for social abuse. Many psions have given up any pretense at legality and plunged with both feet into a life of crime. Beyond using psionics, some choose to engage in other illegal activities. With a few precautions, psions can even commit murder and get away with it – which is another reason psionics has become so feared. The criminal acts of a few can spark widespread crackdowns.

Understanding this, some Psionic Underground communities self-police in order to reduce the number of law enforcement raids and to rehabilitate the image of psionics in general. The Psionic Underground is present to some degree on most high population planets. It is in the Underground where rogue psions can make contact with psionics institute scouts, purchase psionic drugs and equipment, find leads on employment opportunities which require psionic skill, and of course enjoy a social environment where psionics is acceptable – all activities which are considered illegal in the Imperium.

Through a quirk of genetics, destiny or just luck, the one tie that binds the people who make up the Underground is that they all happen to be psionic. Coming from all walks of life, these folks have discovered ways to use their abilities to their advantage – even in more mundane fields. Since the Suppressions, psionics has once again filtered back into mainstream society. This chapter examines some of the ways psionics secretly plays a role in the Imperium.

PUBLIC SERVICE

Despite its own ban on psionics, the Imperium covertly employs psions in several branches of public service. Psionics provides advantages too valuable to disregard simply on principle. The Imperium trains psions for military service and these retirees often continue to serve the government in non-military functions.

Outside of this secret but sanctioned use of psionics, other psions falsely present themselves as normal citizens in order to qualify for government jobs. The number of Imperial employees with psionic capabilities is on par with the estimated ratio of psions in the general population. Not only do the various branches of public service have psions in their ranks, but many of these

departments are charged with dealing with the "psionic problem," which includes establishing and enforcing laws on the subject.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

The Imperium secretly hires psions to work in law enforcement, primarily for

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