

It was in the fall of the fifth year of the fanatical wizard Werdna that our campaign began. What season or year it is now, none of us knows. I believe we are on the ninth level of this accursed dungeon, but time and distance are ever shifting, and reality is fleeting.

As we break camp, my five companions and I sort out our weapons and supplies. We have accumulated wondrous treasures and mighty weapons. Dreams of returning to enjoy the subtle pleasures that this shared booty could bring fill our wakeful sleep. Sezmar, the samurai; Hawkwind, the ninja; and Sarah, the priest, are the vanguard. Moradin, the thief; Prospero, the mage; and Tuck, the bishop, bring up the rear.

We slowly make our way down the zigzagging corridor. Suddenly, the eldritch light cast by Sarah's lomilwa spell reveals a secret door. Kicking the door open, we charge into a small room. Unfortunately, the hellhounds, demons, and deadly creeping coins do not welcome company. A fierce battle ensues that shakes the very foundations of the dungeon. Hawkwind slays a lycarus with his bare hands,

while Sezmar dispatches hellhounds with his murasama blade. The tide of battle turns and twists in a kaleidoscope of weapons and mystical energies. Finally Prospero ends it. While Sarah shields us behind a maporfic spell, Prospero casts the dreaded tiltowait spell. We are victorious!

Bare, magic-blasted walls hardly reward our heroic effort. Our luck suddenly takes a dramatic turn—downward! The secret chute masks the hidden entrance to the tenth level. The final path to Werdna's lair is open. As we are standing around, slapping each other on the back, the air is pierced with a maniacal laugh . . . Werdna waits! Sobered, we regroup, heal our wounds, and set out again. We have no delusion: our greatest challenge lies ahead.

Resolutely raising our banner high, we stealthily tiptoe forward. We quickly vanish in the stygian darkness. Momentarily, our banner shines with its great war cry, "Trebtor Sux!" Then it too vanishes as distant sounds of battle reverberate.

—Book IV, Chapter 9, of the *Wizardry Chronicles*

Come Cast a Spell with Me

Plumbing the Depths of the



If this excerpt stirs excitement within you, then you are on your way to being addicted to one of the most innovative waves sweeping the country. Riding high on the crest of the popularity of computer role-playing games is *Wizardry*. It has been widely acclaimed as the finest and truest adaptation of the Dungeons and Dragons type game yet brought to the computer screen. Besides hitting the top ten on the charts, in the minds of many *Wizardry* should be the 1981 winner of the best game award. The second scenario, "Knight of Diamonds," due for mid-March release, may well capture the 1982 award.

Epic Insomnia. In the short time since *Wizardry*'s introduction, the ripple effect stemming from this unique program has astonished even its creators, Robert Woodhead and Andrew Greenberg. Hordes of fervent *Wizardry* groups (many suffering from acute insomnia) have sprung up around the country. The section of post devoted to games on the Source has been almost completely taken over by *Wizardry* players. When a message was left on the Source looking for input for this article, the deluge of response was phenomenal and diverse. These were some of the comments:

"It sure helps to relax a person after a hard day at work. That troll does look like my boss!"—Mike, Omaha.

"The greatest joy in the game is getting those rare treasures. The other joy is mapping out all the contortions of the maze."—Harry, Brookline, Massachusetts.

"The dawn frequently breaks as a session ends. Luckily my boss is as addicted as I am."—Bill, Freeport, Maine.

"What do you call a sixteenth level ninja with +3 plate, a +3 shield, a +2 helm, silver gauntlets, a Ring of Healing, and a Shuriken? You call him Sir!"—Jon, Richardson, Texas.

Some of the responses were more sobering:

"I think combat in this game is like warfare of the future: controlled on a computer terminal, impersonal, calculated."—Dale, San Francisco.

"Sometimes I submerge myself so much into my characters, I lose almost all sense of my own identity. I once played for three days straight without coming up out of the game. When my party was finally devastated, I almost broke down into tears."—Dave, Seattle.

Real-World Sorcery. Others related *Wizardry* to the real world. For example, from a lengthy interview with Harry Conover of Computer Simulated Sports comes this business application:

"I'd liken *Wizardry* to a fantasized system of personnel management. As the manager of a small group of individ-

Wizardry Phenomenon

by ROE R. ADAMS III



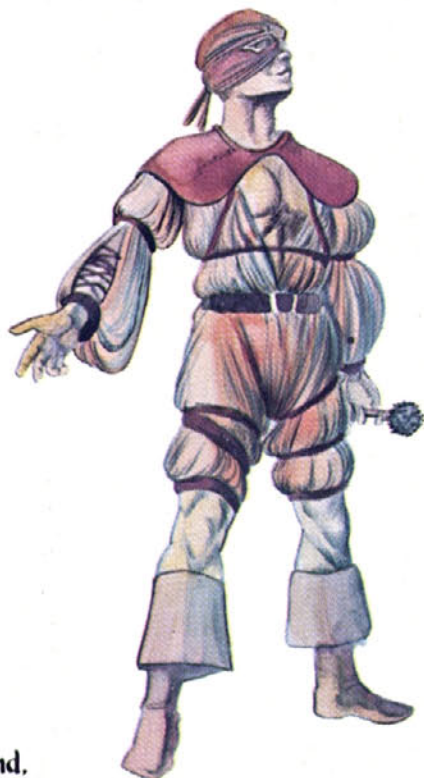


Dr. Ron Levy.

dwarf samurai
from Avon, Connecticut.
Created by John Hanny.

uals, each with their own strengths and weaknesses, you must manipulate the members' performances against the 'competition' so that they achieve a certain goal. In *Wizardry*, as in real life, the goal can be mere survival, or the quest for power, or, over the long haul, the pot of gold."

Another spanner of worlds is Chuck Domp. He has brought *Wizardry* to academe. "CS470 (Teaching Fantasy Simulation)" is in the catalog of courses for Penn State University in New Kensington, Pennsylvania. It is a graduate level continuing education course primarily for teachers and educators. The focus of the course is game theory



Hawkwind.

elfin ninja,
a permanent resident of
Gilgamesh's Tavern,
according to creator Roe Adams.

and application. *Wizardry* was chosen as the most sophisticated computer fantasy game.

"The response has been so great that I hope to offer shortly an entire course centered around *Wizardry*. All the diverse elements that the course seeks to cover are contained within the scope of this game." Domp feels that, through the impetus of his course, *Wizardry* will find its way into many other high schools and colleges as a valuable teaching aid.

Creating Characters, Building Lives. That prophetic tomorrow is a reality today for Dr. Ron Levy, a board-certified child psychiatrist and author of the book, *New Language of Psychiatry*, published by Little, Brown & Company. *Wizardry* has become an added diagnostic and therapeutic tool in his Williamsville, New York, practice. How this came about he recently conveyed in a letter to Sir-tech, the publishers of *Wizardry*.

"This game, which allows children to create a group of adventuring characters and to journey through a maze where they fight battles with monsters, has turned out to be surprisingly helpful to me in my work with children who have emotional problems. . . .

"The child, let us call him Jim (I have changed his name), was living in a family where there were serious marital problems. Jim, an otherwise bright and capable child, had begun doing poorly in elementary school several months before I saw him. I saw Jim on an emergency basis after he had announced to his family that he was going to kill himself. When he came to my office, he let everyone know that he did not want to be there and he refused to talk to me at all.

"This sad-looking school-age child sat quietly in my office staring at the floor, while his parents sat in my waiting room worrying about him. Because this child had declared his intention to commit suicide and was uncooperative with my efforts to interview him, there was little I could do at that point other than to consider admitting him immediately to a psychiatric hospital for his own safety and for further evaluation.

"However, with the help of your game, I was able to move beyond this apparent impasse. Jim agreed to play video games on my Apple computer and he became fascinated by my description of the *Wizardry* game. He made a set of characters, gave them names, and played nonstop for almost an hour. After the first half hour, he was willing to discuss with me what he was doing in the game, and I was able to learn a great deal about him from what he had told me and from watching him play.

"I found out that he was not as depressed as he seemed and that he was able to become enthusiastic about something he was interested in; and we were able to talk about some of his worries, using the game as a springboard. At the conclusion of this visit, he told me he had no intention of killing himself because he 'wanted to come back and play some more.' In this case, as in several others, I have been able, by using your game, to evaluate correctly children who initially appeared much more disturbed than they really were. . . . Although you intended to create a recreational game, you have inadvertently provided me with a marvelous tool for my work with children."



Sarah,
human priest
from Brookline, Massachusetts.

Created by Deborah Conover.

During our interview with Dr. Levy, several related thoughts were brought forward.

"Wizardry is considerably different from *Ultima*, because the perspective of *Wizardry* is always subjective, while *Ultima* is objective." He felt that this difference hampered *Ultima* as a role-playing game.

Dr. Levy also felt that the development of a character through the dungeon parallels, in many ways, the growth of the child. The levels are similar to age brackets, such as the difference between a five-year-old and a six-year-old.

"In a child's description of what his hero can accomplish often lie clues to some of the obstacles and troubles the child experiences in his own life. . . .

"What the character is able to do is what the child fears to do."



Tuck,
elfin bishop
from Aloha, California.

Created by Mary Taylor Kollo.

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Prospero,
hobbit mage
from Brookline,
Massachusetts.

Created by Harry Conover.



One for All and All for One. This train of thought prompted a hypothesis put forth to Dr. Levy:

Wizardry is very different from most role-playing games in that it is designed for parties of six, rather than for solo explorers. In fact, the dungeon inhabitants are so powerful that no one character could survive long by himself. Therefore, unlike the typical game where you become the single character, here you must develop six different characters, each with their own persona and talents. Then the characters' mutual advancement and interaction becomes your goal. This is strongly reminiscent of Herman Hesse's classic concept of the "fragmented man," whereby each character becomes a different fragment of your own personality.

Dr. Levy considered this hypothesis was quite valid and applicable here. "Certainly one of the game's strongest fea-

tures is that the child has much more total involvement with six characters than with one character." As to the therapeutic value of the game, he stated that "this game seems to draw together a number of features that evoke in children many of their fundamental anxieties and to hold out to them the prospect that, with repeated attempts, anxiety-provoking situations can be overcome. . . .

"That is the lesson of the game, that if you keep trying and don't overextend your abilities, you will steadily progress toward a goal."

In his letter to Sir-tech, Dr. Levy closed with this endorsement:

"I believe other professionals who work with children will find the game as useful as I have, and I strongly recommend that child psychiatrists and child psychologists seriously investigate the use of games such as *Wizardry* in the evaluation and treatment of children with emotional disorders."

International Spell. The effects of *Wizardry* are slowly spreading worldwide. A call to a colleague in England brought forth several interesting facts. There the game is selling strongly. England has been heavily into role-playing games for a long time (they feel they invented miniatures), and they are rapidly embracing *Wizardry*. He related that there was a small group of fanatical *Wizardry* players on a nearby air force base where, during work, one has to duck constantly to avoid being blasted by flying lorto and molito spells.

There is also talk in England of organizing *Wizardry* contests, where the winner would be the person whose team

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Moradin.

gnome thief

from Lido Beach, New York.

Created by Manuel Deloso III.

brought out the most gold in a fixed time limit. The event would be grouped into sections by the overall level average of each team, so that it would be fair, and everyone would use the same scenario. There is great enthusiasm for the idea in England; perhaps similar tournaments will be sponsored in the United States.

A great true-life story was related by Harry Conover:

"I've a friend, a high-ranking public official, who's deathly afraid of flying. He's been playing *Wizardry* ever since it came out. His addiction has become so bad that he dreamt he was on a plane that started to spin toward the ground. Rising from his seat, he cast the *Wizardry* spell *kadorto* (which brings characters back to life, even if they are ashes). Immediately the movie screen in the front of the cabin lit up with 'Spell failed' . . . and he knew all was

lost."

War in the Wee Hours. For a moment, step with us through the mirror for a wry touch of perspective, as related by Harry's wife Deborah.

"It was all those 'beep-beep-beeps' at four in the morning that got to me. I knew Harry had solved *Zork* and *Zork II* in record time, but his involvement with this game *Wizardry* was bizarre.

"So I lurched into his office and was silenced with a wave of his hand. 'Jeez,' he muttered, 'six level-ten mages, three chimeras, and three nightstalkers!!!'

"I looked around the room and saw only Pepsi bottles, maze maps, and a man hunched over the keyboard.

"'Harry, it's four in the morning. You can fight them tomorrow.'

"'No. They must be dealt with now' was his abrupt reply, and his fingers flashed across the keyboard.

"'There,' he said, turning and smiling at me, 'that takes care of them! And 6,742 experience points for me and the crew!'

"'Harry, come to bed,' I said, leaving for a saner haven.

"'In a minute,' came his reply, wafting out of his office, 'I've got to get back to the castle first.'

"So, if you see a thirty-four-year-old man outside a castle, tell him to come to bed."

Our spell is wearing thin, time is fleeting. If you can linger, someone is offering free rounds of drinks at Gilgamesh's Tavern and Boltac's Trading Post is running a half-price sale on copper gauntlets. Want to come along? It is only just down the road and turn left. . . .

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The Wonderful Wizard of Ogdensburg:

An Interview with Robert Woodhead

by *MELISSA MILICH*

Once upon a time in the computer industry when several fantasy adventure role-playing games were already on the market, a young man took an existing idea, added some high-level programming to it, and created a game that was truly an adventure.

The game is called *Wizardry* and the programmer is Robert Woodhead. Woodhead is a little like a wizard himself. He has the foresight of Merlin, the intelligence of Gandalf, and the bumbling eccentricities of the great Oz. He is an absolute wizard when it comes to programming.

The result of a collaboration between Woodhead and Andrew Greenberg, who designed the game, *Wizardry* is a game apart from others of its genre. Its success probably rests on its unique qualities: No other game allows as much flexibility in building your own characters, designating strengths and weaknesses that have clear effects; more important, no other game allows you to take groups of characters, up to six at a time, into the dungeon, where they interact and work together to overcome monsters and obstacles. Characters can trade gold and equipment freely, cast beneficial spells on each other, and change position in the expedition to benefit all. Or they can all run from monsters; if one runs, all run.

A Fellowship Feeling. People love *Wizardry* and they

can't tell you why. Robert Woodhead has a theory. "It's a projective game," he explains. "People tend to put their personalities on the characters they invent."

The world of *Wizardry* can be populated with characters of different races—dwarf, elf, gnome, hobbit, and human—and different classes, starting as mages, priests, fighters, or thieves; characters can earn the right to become samurai, bishops, ninjas, and lords. The dungeon has ten levels to conquer and there are numerous personal levels through which your characters progress as they gain experience and strengthen their attributes. You can create as many as twenty characters per disk, any six of which you can gather in the tavern to send on expedition into the maze. Together your band fights monsters, searches for treasure, or has a good old time at the inn.

According to Woodhead, who graduated with a degree in psychology from Cornell, his game offers players a chance to release emotions and pent-up frustrations. "A lot of professional psychologists and psychiatrists use this game with their patients," he says. "It allows the player to encounter groups of monsters, bash in their heads with a sword, and barely get out alive."

Sometimes the characters don't get out alive.

But it's just a game, right?

Chips Off the Old Block. Those who play the game religiously will tell you that when a character they've created, one with whom they've spent many hours fighting battles and finding treasure, if that character dies, well, it's a little like losing a good friend.

And that in part explains the success of the game. The creators of *Wizardry* have done something that poets, storytellers, and filmmakers always attempt but don't always achieve—getting the audience to care.

"It's not a character down there. It's you that's swinging your sword at the monsters," says programmer/psychologist Woodhead. "You've created that character. It's at least a part of you and you don't want it to die."

Fortunately, in *Wizardry* you have opportunities to cast healing spells or to journey to the Temple of Cant in hope of bringing your fallen heroes or heroines back to life.

Many people have noticed likenesses between *Wizardry* and the noncomputerized game, *Dungeons and Dragons*. The concept of the games is quite similar, but the execution of the concept is very different.

In *Dungeons and Dragons*, all the calculations involving battles, strengths, and armor have to be done by the players themselves using paper and pencil. Woodhead has programmed all the calculations in *Wizardry* into the game, which takes care of all the paperwork for the players. More to the point, playing *Dungeons and Dragons* requires that one person must create the dungeon. In *Wizardry*, the fully furnished dungeon is a major integral part of the program.

Dormitory and Dungeons. Woodhead stresses that the creation of *Wizardry* involved an equal partnership. In June of 1980, he thought he'd like to do a computer fantasy game and he happened to mention his idea to Greenberg, a friend at Cornell. Coincidentally, Greenberg was already at work on a game of that type, which he was calling *Wizardry*.

Woodhead liked the name and the idea for the format of the game. What he didn't like was that *Wizardry* at this stage was written in Basic—way too slow, he said. So they took the idea, kept the name, redesigned the database, and Woodhead rewrote the game in Pascal to speed it up.

By late September of that year, the first version of *Wizardry* was running. Full of bugs, but running. Woodhead estimates that there were at least a thousand bugs in the original program, but those were worked out in the course of several weeks of late-night sessions. In November of 1980, *Wizardry* was ready to go outside.

Publisher Sir-tech chose the New York Computer Show for *Wizardry*'s debut. People liked the game and wanted to order copies on the spot.

Runtime Was Slow. But the time—and Apple—wasn't ripe. The release of *Wizardry* had to wait until the availability from Apple Computer of its runtime system, which allows programs written in Pascal (like *Wizardry*) to run on Apples without language systems. During the wait, Woodhead refined the game further and incorporated improvements suggested by players of the early version.

By spring of 1981, Apple Computer had come through with the runtime system and review copies of the improved

game were being distributed. Early copies of *Wizardry* were sold at the 1981 Applefest. A few people reported bugs, and work resumed. By late September 1981, *Wizardry* was being shipped out the doors of Sir-tech, its publisher, in which Woodhead is a partner.

And still, *Wizardry* improves. The program is so complex and complete that playtesting isn't sufficient for trying every possible move. So, occasionally, early players would try something no one else had tried and run right into an insect Woodhead didn't plan on. It was time for an update.

But the updating process didn't stop with killing the bugs or with incorporating suggested changes. Players of the older versions notice other subtle changes: bubbles coming from bubbly slime, less money and many more experience points for killing the Murphy's ghosts in the seven-door room, new monsters. These are the changes Woodhead has thought of since the previous version.

"I'm never really satisfied with *Wizardry*. I'm always working on it."

The latest version is available free from dealers or through friends to all who own older versions. The new version has an update routine that takes five minutes or so to modify old versions without hurting characters.

Whelping of a Wizard. Robert Woodhead was born in Tunbridge Wells, Kent in southeastern England in 1957 and spent the first seven years of his life there. Has his British heritage been responsible for his fascination with castles, warriors, and other aspects of the old English folklore evident in *Wizardry*?

"No, not really, but it did inspire my love for Marmite, fish and chips, and Roundtree's Fruit Gums."

It was during his teens that Woodhead's family moved to Ogdensburg, New York. The Ogdensburg Free Academy, where he attended high school, didn't offer any computer instruction, so on Saturday afternoons Woodhead's mother drove him to a college twenty miles away where he could learn programming.

In 1975, he enrolled at Cornell University. Cornell boasts a prestigious graduate program in computer science, but, at the time Woodhead attended, there was no computer science major for undergraduates.

Woodhead's second interest was psychology, so he majored in that. As it turned out, it was easy for Woodhead to combine his psychology studies with his interest in computers because a good deal of the homework projects involved using campus mainframes.

"I really enjoyed my major, and it's a great thing to have for parties."

Juggling Habits. When they learn of his psychology background, people sometimes ask Woodhead's ideas on the alleged phenomenon of hackers or computer junkies—those overzealous computer users that sit in front of the screen too long. Do they really exist?

"I've known computer junkies, or computer nerds—whatever you want to call them—guys who get addicted to the machine and need to get their daily fix from it. I've seen it in a lot of people, but there's a point between just being enthusiastic and being neurotic."

"I was a victim of this at one time," Woodhead admits, "but now I can walk away from the machine if I need to without feeling bad. I'm not addicted to it anymore. If someone offered me a week's vacation and I couldn't bring my computer along, I'd still go."

Although he's still basically an amateur psychologist, Woodhead offers some advice to those who are worried that they might be turning into nerds. "Too much of anything can hurt you. Even water."

Besides computers and psychology, Woodhead enjoys water skiing, scuba diving, and watching television. He can also juggle.

"Andy [Greenberg] taught me that. I started out with two balls, and worked my way up to three. But then somebody stole one of the balls, so I'm now juggling two balls and a Rubik's cube. The hard part is trying to solve the Rubik's cube while I'm juggling."

He's kidding, of course. We hope.

Involuntary Tithing for the Dole. Software pirates are anathema to Woodhead. He estimates that there are as many pirated copies of *Wizardry* as there are legitimate ones. "My income has been cut in half by pirates. Whether they realize it or not, they're ripping me off, and most of them are normally fine, upstanding citizens."

Woodhead considers some of the opinions held by pirates "absolutely outrageous." Every pirate believes that there are mitigating circumstances in his or her case that justify making the illegal copies.

"They claim that software companies are ripping them off. They claim they really didn't need the program, that they wouldn't have spent the money on it anyway."

He tells of a pirate he met on a computer bulletin board line. An attorney by profession, the person felt he was justified in pirating a copy of every existing software program because he was a "collector."

"This guy is a lawyer and if he got caught I'd love to see him state his case in court. He'd be laughed right out of the courtroom. And, I hope, disbarred."

"It just offends me that this can happen. Lawyers, doctors, other people whose professions depend on their ability to think clearly and logically—it offends me that they can be involved in something so dishonest."

Woodhead believes that individually facing up to what they are doing and examining the long and short term effects of their actions might stop some pirates. But, "Greed is human nature, and piracy is one of the few things I'm pessimistic about. I don't think it will end."

After the Blue Ribbon. How does Woodhead see his future? "Well, I'm British, so I can't be elected President. But seriously, I don't know. The computer industry twirls around so fast, so I think I'll continue to do what interests me, because that's what I seem to do best."

"Obviously, I'd like to get rich but, given the choice, I'd choose personal fulfillment over cash."

Although a few of his plans are top secret, Woodhead revealed some. He'll be devoting more effort to promoting his other game, *Galactic Attack*, which he believes could be a "real sleeper." He'll also finish the project he and Sirtech's Gordon Eastman are working on together—a home-arcade game called *Star Maze*.

He'd like to do more collaborating, pairing his programming talents with, for example, a graphics expert to create another big hit.

"Computer programming is just a very complicated game. You take something nice and complicated and make it nice and simple. It's a rush to get the machine to do something you told it to do."

And programming has its rewards. About eight thousand copies of *Wizardry* have been sold to date, and Woodhead enjoys the fan letters and phone calls he receives. Except one.

"I'd like to state in print that the tenth level can be reached very easily from the ninth level. People call me in the middle of the night to ask about that, but the clue is right in front of them."

Present Rewards and Gifts to Come. Nevertheless, it's the phone calls and letters from devoted *Wizardry* fans that have made all the headaches and frustrations worth it.

"They're the most ego-gratifying things," says Woodhead proudly. I'm overwhelmed by the response.

"*Wizardry* is not just a product of Andy and me. It's also a product of all the players who have offered suggestions."

And so it comes as no surprise when Woodhead says that his future plans also include creating even more scenarios for the game.

Wizardry. It's likely to become as necessary to play it on your micro as it was to see *Star Wars* at the local movie theater. And, equally likely, the happy wizard of Ogdensburg will go right on adding enhancements to an already great game.

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