

Slade Overworld Stevens

One world.
One nation.
One future.
UNICorp Industries.
A brighter tomorrow today.



Spider Dreams presents

Slade Stevens' ...Overworld

Slade Stevens' ...Overworld is a campaign setting based on a dystopian future. The nations of the world have fallen, the ecosystems of the planet have been destroyed. All that is left are massive biospheres whose only purpose is to continue UNICorp's commerce and productivity, even though there is no other corporation to compete against, and the only consumers are its own employees. Outside of these CorpStates, life has managed to continue, though it is primitive and brutal. There are myths and legends of a utopian society living beneath the surface of the barren earth, but many do not believe that such a place exists.

Will you be able to survive the harsh and desolate Overworld? Will you rise to godlike power within the ranks of UNICorp? Or will your adventures lead you down another path?

Find out what the future holds for you in *Slade Stevens' ...Overworld*.

(This free version of *Slade Stevens' ...Overworld* is intended as an introduction to the full version of the campaign setting. It does not contain all the special features of the full version, but is fully playable. In the future, supplements to this Active Exploits setting will be available, free of charge, to enhance your enjoyment of this setting. Spider Dreams, the Spider Dreams logo, *Slade Stevens' ...Overworld*, and its contents are Copyright 2002 by Sacred Wolf Inc, unless otherwise specified. Spider Dreams is an imprint of Sacred Wolf Inc.)

*This campaign setting is best played creating characters for Pulp and Epic Reality rules for Active Exploits.



ACTIVE EXPLOITS DICELESS ROLEPLAYING

Active Exploits is a diceless roleplaying system designed for quick and easy play. The Active Exploits Core Rules are available on the internet at <http://www.pigames.net>. Anyone who wishes to distribute new material for free may do so, provided it includes this notice and does not violate the terms of the distribution agreement (available with the core rules). If you wish to charge a fee for such material, other than as an article in a magazine or other periodical, you must first obtain a license from **Politically Incorrect Games** by contacting them at info@pigames.net.

The following materials based on Active Exploits, entitled *Slade Stevens' ...Overworld*, are made available by, and Copyright 2002 by Sacred Wolf Inc, and are not necessarily endorsed in any way by Politically Incorrect Games or any publisher of other Active Exploits materials. Neither Politically Incorrect Games or any publisher of other Active Exploits materials is in any way responsible for the content of these materials unless specifically credited.

Original Active Exploits materials Copyright 2002 by Politically Incorrect Games and Brett M. Bernstein, All Rights Reserved. Active Exploits is a trademark of Politically Incorrect Games.

Spider Dreams

Over fifteen years ago, a friend of mine repaid a small loan by giving me a large box of comic books that a friend of his had pawned off on him. There were some mainstream superhero titles from the early 1980s, some of which were among the first to hit the direct market (comics that were sold through comic book retailers only). They weren't the type of comics that I had expected. They were well written, beautifully drawn, and grown up. They were directed at a slightly older audience than the average superhero comics. They were cool.

That got me started collecting comics. The stuff that was being published at the time was amazing. The Big Two publishers were putting mature stories and graphic novels on the shelves next to the superhero fare, all of which was entertaining and worth reading. The indies were publishing some truly amazing stuff as well. The mid- to late-'80s and early '90s was a great time for comics.

Before that, I had been turned on to another staple of geeks. Role playing. Way back when E. Gary Gygax was running TSR and making worlds come to life, I found a bunch of indie publishers in role playing games, as well. Companies that were getting systems on the shelves (or, more likely, through mail order) that rivaled the Main Game. (I have some of the first products that Wizards of the Coast ® put out. They were doing special things before someone got the idea of trading card games.)

I realized, about 15 years ago, that people were the ones making these comic books and games. It was a revelation to me that these things didn't just spring into being on shelves and from ads in magazines. (E. Gary Gygax will always be more than merely human to me, though. He's the Godfather of it all.) I got the idea that maybe, with a little luck, some cash, and a lot of work, that I could do that, too.

So, for fifteen years, I've been looking into products, crunching numbers, following the industries. I've deforested large areas with the amount of paper that I've gone through trying to find the way to make a publishing company happen. There was one thing that I kept thinking about while I was working on getting a company together: the rejection letters that I kept getting from publishers. Almost every one of them had the same regret. The work is good, the ideas are solid, but I didn't have the experience that they wanted, or the ideas weren't quite what they were looking for.

There are a lot of creators (writers, artists, inkers, pencillers, letterers, and so on) who keep hearing those regrets from publishers. I wanted to make a place where those creators who lacked experience could prove themselves. Where they could connect with an audience. Where they wouldn't be giving away their creations to a company, but would still have control. (Jerome Siegel and Joseph Shuster got shafted when they sold their idea for a superhero.) I wanted to build a haven for creators and fans. Sacred Wolf Inc is the culmination of all those years of gaming and working on the fringe of the comics industry (as a writer and editor). And it's only the beginning....

William A. Rae, president
Sacred Wolf Inc

Spider Dreams presents:

Slade Stevens'
...Overworld

CONTENTS

A brief history	4
The World and Ecology	5
The Cultures	7
Interactions between cultures	10
Cultures in the <i>Active Exploits</i> system	12
Economies	13
Threats and Challenges	14
Special Characters	16
UNICorp North America	18

The creators:

William A. Rae writer

Nick Allbrandt artist, "The Pilot" and "The Man"

Death Approaches Young Woman, circa 1541 (page 14) Visual by www.PDImages.com

There are more editors than I can mention here (mainly friends who had to slog through this material). Thanks go out to you all.

Many thanks go to Brett M. Bernstein and the crew at Politically Incorrect Games.

This work of fiction is dedicated to my father, who didn't want me to try this sort of thing. And to the gamers of the world. Peace.

SLADE STEVENS'
...OVERWORLD

*A brief summary of the events leading up to the Fall of Humanity
and the rise of Overworld*

After the Moon became colonized, and Humanity began to explore the inner planets and create habitable stations both in space and on Mars, Earth underwent massive changes. Large corporations began to build cities around their factories, ensuring a constant workforce and consumer base. The economic superpowers (especially the United States, England, Germany, and Japan) grew at an astonishing rate, which threatened a state of depression in the rest of the world. Smaller countries, and developing nations could not compete in the new globalized markets. Across the globe, citizens began to riot for food and shelter, demanding that their governments take action against the economic neo-imperialism.

Many of those nations mobilized their militaries, allying with each other to deal with the war of attrition with arms. It is said that the rebellion would have been successful, had the nations of the Middle East been able to negotiate a truce with Israel, or if China had submitted command of her troops to the Russian command. But, there were many factors that kept the uprising from success. Ultimately, the United States, with assistance from corporate militias and police forces, put down the rebellion.

But the aid came at a price.

The corporations understood the power that they now held. They used their new influence to establish a one-world government body and economy, which placed ultimate power in the hands of the United States (which became the United Nation of Industry). It wasn't long before the cities that the corporations had established transformed into States in their own right. Across the world, nation-states were replaced by these CorpStates. But in their greed and search for more wealth and power, the CorpStates quickly depleted the planet's already strained resources. The planet responded with earthquakes, floods, volcanic eruptions, and violent storms. Ravenous infestations of rodents and insects decimated the populations where food was produced, and most of the crops and livestock. They brought with them terrible plagues which wiped out cities within days. Without access to food, many of UNICorp's citizens starved. The people tried to stage a new rebellion against the new world order. It never ended, even after much of the planet was turned into a wasteland.

After decades of strife and turmoil, the government survived through the off-world colonies and the CorpStates that remained. Known as UNICorp, it continues to supply goods and services to its citizen-workers (though the citizens are little more than well-treated slaves). The rebellion has survived among the outcasts and the few survivors who have made their home in the wastelands. It is rumored that a part of the former state of Humanity has survived, beneath the earth, and secluded from the events of the Overworld.

SLADE STEVENS'
...OVERWORLD

Background Information

THE WORLD AND ECOLOGY

One World

After the Fall, the planet was left barren. A few areas remain viable for plantlife, such as the river basins of the Mississippi, Nile, and Amazon, along with other large sources of “fresh” water. Many plants evolved root and leaf systems which leech water from the soil, and filter out the poisons that can’t be neutralized or adapted to. Mountainous regions retained some vegetation, though vast forests no longer stand. Where plants are able to grow, the density is sparse and the root systems are spread out. The rainforests’ delicate ecologies were unsustainable. Rugged plains and deserts have taken their places on the globe. The majority of oxygen is generated by oceanic ecosystems, where the massive kills of sea creatures allowed kelp, plankton and algae to run rampant. Bodies of water such as the Great Lakes, Mediterranean Sea and the Gulf of Nevada have developed separate kelp bogs hundreds of square miles apiece.

Animal life underwent mutations, as well. Herbivores, such as deer, elk, and cattle, increased in size and mass. Many of these species became somewhat predatory in nature, adding insects and small reptiles to their diet, some resorting to the cannibalism of the weaker members of the herd when other food becomes

too scarce. Their bodies developed systems to store food and water for long periods of time without having to digest their own muscle or organ tissues. Reptiles flourish in the deserts and wastelands, while amphibians are drawn to the vast kelp bogs. Insects became more diverse, though fundamentally unchanged. These inhabit more of the planet than humans.

Like most of the remaining life, birds have found habitable places near water sources, where food is plentiful. Carrion feeders enjoyed a brief population explosion after the Fall, until their sheer numbers drove many of their species close to extinction through disease, starvation and direct competition for food sources.

Humanity adapted to the massive and dramatic ecological change in several ways. UNICorp, the monolithic company which caused much of the planetary destruction, built biospheres around its complexes (known as CorpStates). These domes are built to withstand nuclear war. They house the massive industrial complexes where the citizens of UNICorp live and work. The climate is regulated, and the air is filtered of any contaminants, including malign bacteria and viruses. Illness and disease are non-existent within the CorpStates. (Those citizens who are born with disease, and those who become injured and unable to work, are removed from the CorpState and dumped into the Overworld outside the biosphere. They are considered “waste material.” Those who are found by Overworlders are often taken in as part

of the community. If they are not found, they are not likely to survive more than one or two days.)

Within the high domes of the CorpStates, hydroponics is widely used for growing food for the population of the consumer-associates who live and work for UNICorp there. Trade with specialized CorpState farms, and with the Off-World colonies also supplies a variety of foodstuffs.

In the harsh environment of the polluted and toxic lands outside the CorpStates, humanity has adapted to survival. They have grown shorter and more compact (squat) in the oxygen-poor air, which has increased their strength and endurance. The Overworld cultures (those who live outside of the domed CorpStates) have also become inventive, and try to find every possible use for the few resources that they have.

Overworlders hunt, fish, and gather vegetation where possible, and supplement their

food stocks by raiding the UNICorp shipping network.

Beneath the surface, humanity found a refuge from the destruction of the Fall and its aftermath. In many areas, humans escaped the ravages of the Fall within underground complexes which housed secondary governments that were to be activated in the event of global destruction. When UNICorp took control, these complexes were updated and converted for UNICorp's use. However, in the chaos after the Fall, these complexes were forgotten, much like the Off-World colonies. Their inhabitants continued to live and develop their own culture, and their society flourished.

Subearthers have developed their own forms of hydroponics and sunless farming. It is rumored that they also trade with the CorpStates and some of the larger Overworld factions.

(Sample map of UNICorp North America.)



THE CULTURES

There are five cultures in *Slade Stevens'* ...*Overworld*. The CorpStates, the Overworlders (rebels), the Metagenics ("the Evolved," mutants), the Subearthers, and the Off-Worlders.

CorpStates: These are the domed cities inhabited by the ruling culture. The CorpStates control the manufacture, production, and distribution of goods and services. Within the CorpStates, modern civilization has continued and advanced, notably in art and science. The CorpStates are often attacked by small raiding parties of Overworlders and Metagenics. They combat this minor problem by recruiting reconnaissance agents and soldiers to seek out and destroy any potential threats. (The inhabitants of the Overworld who keep to themselves are left unmolested by the CorpStates; only when their interests are directly threatened do they send out the teams of agents.) They have found that the superstitious inhabitants of the Overworld are easily controlled through the CorpStates' image-building campaign. Their research has shown that creating a uniform appearance for their main reconnaissance agents has led to the inhabitants of the Overworld believing them to be supernatural creatures. Most of these agents are deployed in solo missions, and the Overworlders and Metagenics believe that it is one individual, rather than a group of uniform individuals, who are scouting.

Within the CorpStates, everything is provided to the consumer-associates. Basic needs, like food, shelter, and clothing are automatically distributed. Anything that is not

considered to be necessary for survival may be purchased from a consumer-associate's salary bank. Films, books, works of art, and other entertainment are relatively inexpensive, as they are relatively easy and cost-effective to reproduce. A happy consumer-associate is a productive consumer-associate. Employment and education are graded in levels; jobs are as diverse as the individuals who are able to work. (Those who are, for any reason, unable to produce for UNICorp are eliminated from the CorpState. However, UNICorp makes every possible effort to find a way to make its consumer-associates productive.) Other luxuries, such as a private vehicle or large living spaces, are in higher demand, as they are limited in number. (Virtual estate is more affordable than real estate.)

Consumer-Associates are commonly tied into one CorpState, living and working there throughout their lives. Some are groomed by their superiors for advancement into the upper echelons of management. Only the lucky few born to members of the Board may serve UNICorp at the highest level. Even among those, it is most likely that they will only rise to the position of Vice-President of a CorpState.

Consumer-Associates enjoy an easy life, as long as they remain loyal to UNICorp and their superiors. All Consumer-Associates read, write, and speak Esperanto.

Overworlders: This is the collective identity of all cultures (factions) outside of the CorpStates. This includes everything from communal settlements to individual drifters. The main subculture of this faction are the Rebels, who

struggle against the power of the CorpStates, work to protect the settlements from the dangers of the Overworld, and who explore the forgotten places of the planet. The society is generally feudal in nature, although many systems of government (from tyranny to anarchy) exist. Without a money-based economic system, the inhabitants of the Overworld have adopted a communal spirit. While small battles might occur between rival settlements, there is more of a “mass survival” mentality.

The majority of Overworlders are hunters or farmers, fishermen or food collectors. The less common professions include artisans and tradespeople. Artists exist, generally as religious leaders, or within the religious community. Where the consumer-associates view UNICorp as a deity, the Overworlders see UNICorp as the great evil. There is no unified concept of a deity (or pantheon).

Overworlder and Metagenic PCs may choose from one of the following Cultures: Nomad, Tribe, or Solitary. Nomads go where the resources are. They spend their lives roaming the Overworld, trading with other Cultures, hunting and gathering, or raiding. They seldom make lasting bonds with outsiders, except for purposes of trade or other gain. They are close-knit communities, and fear that outsiders may try to break up or destroy their way of life. They speak English as an automatic language.

Tribal Culture is similar to Nomadic, except there is a more subdued level of xenophobia. Most tribes (and their members) are confident enough in the strength of their society that they don't openly distrust strangers. This

culture is found near sources of fresh water, where hunting, fishing, farming, and ranching may be practiced.

Those from a Solitary Culture are either outcasts or hermits. These souls live as mercenaries, raiders, guides, or hunter/gatherers (often they utilize all of these skills to survive). Many members of the Solitary Culture are highly xenophobic and paranoid (with good reason—they are shunned and avoided by most members of the other cultures; Metagenics are even hunted for sport). However, some will join briefly with other Cultures (usually the fully human or human-looking Metagenics), often to obtain a common goal.



(The Pale Rider. Affiliated with the Overworld Rebels.)

Metagenics: These Overworlders encompass a range of former humans. Some Metagenics (also known as “the Evolved,” though this term is used almost solely by the Metagenics—most members of the other cultures refer to them as “mutants” or the more derogatory “spawn”) are the descendents of the unlucky few who survived in the worst areas of the Fall, the people exposed to various types of radiation, biochemical weaponry, or disease. Others are the by-product of failed eugenics experiments conducted by UNICorp, and dumped into the Overworld. Both

types are usually disfigured in some way, ranging from slight to monstrous. Every surviving Metagenic has acquired some type of preternatural ability.

Metagenics aren't trusted by the members of the other cultures. Most of the Metagenics fall into the Solitary Culture, though a handful of them come from Nomad or Tribe Cultures. They are outcasts, at best shunned by the other inhabitants (including other Metagenics). A few small nomadic bands have formed, though they are uncommon. A handful of the Evolved have formed tenuous friendships with other cultures, and these are grudgingly accepted near the Overworlders' settlements, but never among the other Overworlders.

Off-Worlders: Before the Fall, UNICorp utilized the space colonies (set up by various governments on space stations, the moon, and Mars) to increase their profits and production. After the Fall, the UNICorp and CorpState's advertisements continued to exert an influence on the culture of the Off-Worlders. Products have achieved a nearly deified status, while the advertisements themselves evolved into a form of entertainment.

The technology of the Off-World colonies grew exponentially, although UNICorp is unaware of the leaps that science has taken. (UNICorp believes that the colonies are much like the Overworld societies, that they fell apart after instant communications were cut off with the Off-Worlders.) Biomechanical pets were developed, and evolved at an astonishing speed as they adapted to life outside of the biospheres on the moon and the terraformed continents of

Mars; the more distant colonies on Europa and Io orbiting Jupiter were nearly wiped out by their own creations. Eugenics advanced beyond UNICorp's capabilities, and new foods, fuels, and medicines were developed. The Off-World colonies have come close to becoming truly Utopian.

Communications between the Off-Worlders and UNICorp are in written form, carried on shipments to and from UNICorp. These are generally simply invoices. Information exchange is rare between UNICorp and the colonies, unless it effects a shipment of goods.

Subearththers: In the twentieth century, governments constructed deep underground cities (such as Mount Winter and New Erewhon) for their leaders to go in the event of a nuclear holocaust. Replacement governments were put into place in these enclaves, in case the leadership didn't survive a nuclear war. They were upgraded as the twenty-first century progressed, and became fully self-sufficient. When UNICorp rose to power, these subterranean cities were forgotten. After the Fall, twentieth (and early twenty-first) century society continued. The Subearththers expanded their territories through mining and linking their cities together, thousands of feet beneath the earth's surface. Some of the Subearththers cities happened on links to the CorpStates, and the Overworld at large, and they began to establish limited trade compacts with those cultures. The Subearthther cities are completely self-sufficient, however, with life-support systems, hydroponic farms and sunless ranches, and a money-based

economic system (though barter and trade are still common practices).

Where the CorpStates have unified society in every way, the Subearthers continue to encourage diversity. The most obvious example of this is seen in language and communication. The CorpStates and various Overworld cultures use Esperanto as their sole language. The Subearthers commonly speak English, and most of the population speaks at least one other language (either as a second language, or as native speakers). The CorpStates control information and learning with the iron grip of a miser. The Subearthers' greatest asset is their accessibility to books and libraries. (Overworlders have a utilitarian approach to learning. If it can be applied to survival, it is worthwhile. Otherwise, it's useless and a waste of valuable time. The Overworlders' literacy rate is about one percent. The rest of the population can neither read nor write, except for a few simple words at best.)

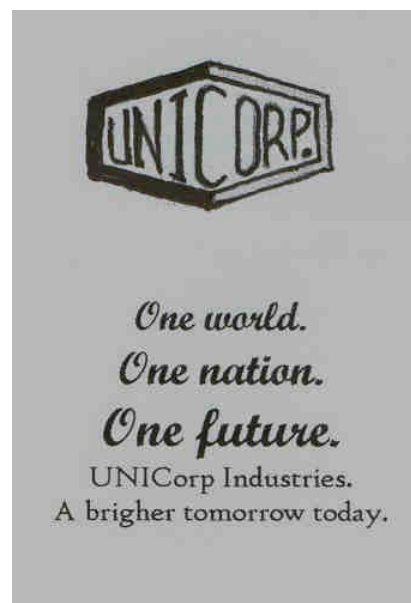
INTERACTIONS BETWEEN CULTURES

One Nation

The interaction of cultures has become entrenched in most individuals. The CorpStates suffer the existence of the Overworld cultures only because it isn't cost-effective to destroy all of them, and the conditions of the Overworld will eventually eliminate all life. They trade with the Subearthers, mainly for goods and services. Information is guarded by UNICorp as closely as gold. To UNICorp, information and technology give them an advantage over the other cultures, as well as their own people. UNICorp actively gathers the details of every

aspect of their citizens, from eating habits to productivity at work, constant medical monitoring, and even the conversations. The citizens of UNICorp's CorpStates have ceased noticing that everything in their life is monitored and recorded. The culture has become controlled by UNICorp, though the control is refined and subtle. Every nuance in a CorpState is designed to promote the exchange of goods and services, but knowledge and learning are regulated tightly by UNICorp. The only knowledge that is shared is that which is vital to the exchange of goods and services. (For example, doctors do not give patients a diagnosis. This practice is not questioned, or even given a thought. Patients accept that the doctors are there to help them remain as productive and useful as possible for the longest possible time. Anything that a doctor does is a way to promote the health and well-being of the citizen. This has made it easier for UNICorp to brainwash the Consumer-Associates through the use of psychotropic drugs.)

(Paid UNICorp advertisement.)



The Subearther culture is similar to the modern American and European cultures. The most common type of government is some form of democracy, in which all citizens are equal. In these Modern Subearther cultures, goods, services, and information are traded according to supply and demand. Coin currency is minted (as opposed to the barter systems used in the Overworld or the scan-chips used in the CorpStates). Libraries, both hard-copy and virtual (where there is a sustainable power source), are the dominant gathering places. Wealth and poverty are not seen as ways to classify people; they are merely circumstances that may change. Crime is rare, and the majority of it is non-violent. In general, Subearthers are a very accepting culture, the least xenophobic of the cultures. The Modern Cultures have electric light and heat, which are powered by various types of power plants (including geothermal, hydroelectric, and limited nuclear power). The Old Cultures rely on fire for their light and heat. These cultures are predominantly found beneath the ruins of the ancient cities that existed before the conquest of the world by UNICorp and before the Fall. They are literate, but much of their education and entertainment comes from storytelling. A few Subearthers are solitary drifters, moving from Subearth city to Subearth city, making a living as they can. Those who are from the Solitary culture share many of the same traits as the other Subearther cultures, such as education, a love of learning, and a belief in equality. However, they aren't as trusting or accepting as their counterparts from structured cultures.

The Overworld cultures share one common bond: a hatred of UNICorp. The reasons for this are diverse, from jealousy of the CorpStates' opulent lifestyles to the bitter loathing of being cast out from that world. Most Overworlders have no idea that a civilization exists beneath the surface of the earth. To others, the Subearthers are just a myth, a story to keep their misbehaving children in line. Those that do believe that the Subearthers exist believe that they are the spirits of the earth who will punish people who do not act properly within their society. However, the Metagenics are a greater, and more present threat. The Metagenics that have devolved into bestial forms often attack the other Overworlders for food. The other real threats come from the creatures of the tainted surface world that have evolved into cunning predators. The threat from the CorpStates is minimal compared to the denizens of the Overworld. The Overworlders who have turned to the theft of goods from the CorpStates are the only Overworlders who are actively pursued and eliminated by UNICorp.

Overworlders are superstitious and poorly educated. Most individuals have learned trades and skills, knowledge that is necessary to their survival and the continuation of the communities and cultures, such as electronics, computers, mechanics, and engineering. Few become entertainers and artists; in the Overworld cultures, such people serve as the spiritual leaders.

UNICorp has used the superstitious nature and ignorance of the Overworlders to develop a fear-based propaganda campaign. They train and deploy special operatives, who

work alone, to hunt down known rebels, raiders, and Metagenics who have become too powerful or who have cost the CorpStates too much money. By giving these operatives a uniform appearance and deploying them only one at a time into any given region, the Overworld cultures have come to believe that they are supernatural creatures. These UNICorp operatives have gained the status of deities (or demons).

CULTURES IN THE *ACTIVE EXPLOITS* SYSTEM

Cultures in *Slade Stevens' ...Overworld* determine how a character will most likely interact with other cultures, and how members of the cultures will interact with each other. Most cultures are isolationistic and xenophobic (even to the degree that they are fearful of outsiders from their own culture, who are just from the next village).

In the Active Exploits system, culture gives bonuses to the character's abilities, and determines what skills a character may choose. It also is used as a guide to how the characters are treated. A powerful character may be welcomed as a hero by one culture, while actively hunted by another. The bonuses for starting characters are: CorpState culture gives a +1 to the Reasoning ability, Subearther culture gives a +1 bonus to the Creativity ability, Overworld culture gives a +1 bonus to the Awareness ability, and Metagenic culture gives a +1 bonus to the Fitness ability. This bonus may be moved by players to a different ability at character creation. (This setting is best used with Pulp or Epic characters.)

The different cultures also make different Aptitudes available to the characters. Since the different cultures have different levels of technology and different challenges to their survival, some Aptitudes are not open to some characters. These may not be learned by starting characters, and cannot be used unskilled by characters of that culture.

Aptitudes not open to the CorpState culture are: Boating, Forging, Jousting, Melee, Sailing, Trapping, Warfare, Animal Handling, Farming (some characters may have a background in Hydroponic Farming, if allowed by the director), Herbal Medicine, Legends, Masonry, and Survival.

Aptitudes not open to the Subearther culture are: Boating, Driving, Forging, Jousting, Sailing, Trapping, Warfare, Animal Handling, Farming (see note above), and Survival.

Aptitudes not open to the Overworld cultures (Overworlders and Metagenics): Streetwise, Court Etiquette (this Aptitude only applies to dealing with the upper echelon of UNICorp), Financial, and Literacy (this Aptitude is closed to Overworld characters; it may not be taken at any time by player characters). In addition, two fields of Academia are closed to Overworld characters: Humanities and Social Sciences.

Academia skills that are not open to CorpState culture are: Archaeology and History. (UNICorp tries to maintain a "zero knowledge" policy toward the past. It tries to maintain that there was no world before UNICorp, nothing existed prior to UNICorp's development. This helps to increase the belief that UNICorp is a spiritual entity rather than a corporation.) Also,

Sociology and Theology are not open. During play, these Academia skills are used at two skill categories lower for CorpState characters.

The only Academia skill that is restricted from the Subearthers is Piloting. Since the Subearthers are the only culture who has access to the knowledge and history of the world before the Fall, characters have no restrictions to learning. The Subearthers maintain both hard-copy and virtual libraries, which are open to the people. They encourage learning and knowledge over active warfare or fighting.

The Special Abilities and Skills are only open to Metagenic characters. These abilities are not arcane in nature, but represent the transformations that the Metagenics have undergone through eugenic experimentation. The Arcane Abilities and Skills apply to Metagenics as “Evolutions.” Evolutions come at a price, however. On the first Evolution gained (at character creation), the character automatically becomes a Fugitive (in addition to any other Gimmicks or Convictions that the character has). For each subsequent Evolution, the character must take a negative or harmful Gimmick or Conviction (Vulnerability, Delusional, Dependency, Impulsive, Paranoid, Phobic, Raging, Timid). These Convictions may be taken multiple times for different types of the same Conviction (example: Dependency on tobacco first, then later the character gains a Dependency on a psychotropic drug). These always manifest themselves at the level of Compulsion.

Once a Metagenic character gains three Evolutions, the character automatically gains the Prestige Gimmick. However, this means that the

character is a well-known threat. The character is recognized and openly feared, hated, and may be attacked without provocation. Even if the character acts heroically, other cultures will never trust that character completely.

The only Special Ability that may be taken by a culture other than Metagenic is the Relic. These are technological in origin and use. They may act to boost an ability, or mimic one of the Evolutions. Relics must be deciphered (if their intended use is not already known by the character) through trial and error. Academia skills and Aptitudes may influence the outcome. The nature and use of Relics are limited only by imagination.

ECONOMIES

“Everything has a price. Not everyone is willing to pay.”

Within the CorpStates, goods and services are paid for by using scan-chips imbedded in either the back of the right hand or the forehead (if no hand is available) of the associate-consumers. These chips are linked to a central mainframe that tracks the person’s productivity, expenditures, earnings, medical and legal records; every aspect of an individual is encrypted on these chips. They are also wired to monitor the person’s health; a secondary effect is that the associate-consumers’ involuntary responses may be used to discover criminal intent, or locate and stop criminal activities as they happen. As a result, crime and immoral activity have become almost non-existent.

Housing, food, and clothing are supplied for consumer-associates by UNICorp. Any goods and services that are not absolutely necessary for survival (defined as “luxuries”)

may be purchased from the CorpState out of the consumer-associate's salary bank. Each consumer-associate has a base salary of fifty dollars per week, which may increase or decrease depending on their productivity. For example, a CorpState Investigator might receive a wage of twenty dollars one week because she was only able to spend two days (sixteen hours) in research and investigation; the next week, she might receive a wage of two hundred dollars for exposing an illegal bartering ring, which took sixty hours of dedicated work. She might want to use part of the extra one hundred fifty dollars in her wage bank to go to a mid-range restaurant and have a seven dollar meal before shopping for a new personal computer (average cost of one hundred dollars).

Outside of the CorpStates, in the barren lands of the Overworld, the economy is more primitive. Barter and trade are the most common ways that goods change hands (theft is a close second, while gift-giving is rare). Items have intrinsic value; they are worth as much as the person values them. Electronic goods, and items that require expendable resources (such as flashlights, guns, and vehicles) have little value themselves, while the resources that they require (batteries, ammunition, and fuel) have a much greater value. For example, a rebel leader might trade a quart of water for a pistol, but he might give four cattle for a box of cartridges for that pistol. The barter system is very individualistic and need-based.



THREATS AND CHALLENGES

One Future

The greatest threat to the inhabitants of the Overworld is the state of the atmosphere after the Fall. There are pockets of irradiated earth that have become wastelands, where nothing grows. Within these pockets (which can be up to several miles across), Overworlders (with the exception of some Metagenics who have become immune) suffer a -1 Fatigue penalty to all abilities and skills. Subearththers suffer a -2 Fatigue penalty, while CorpState characters (who are not wearing special protection) suffer a -3 penalty. This effect is cumulative, increasing the Fatigue penalty by -1 for each hour spent within the radiation wasteland. When the character's abilities all decrease to -1 due to exposure, the character dies. Overworlders and Subearththers regain one ability point per day. The one point may be put into any one of the character's abilities. CorpState characters suffering from exposure may only regain lost ability points through specialized medical care (at the rate of four points per day). The effect of radiation sickness lasts until treatment is given.

These pockets of radiation exist throughout the Overworld, concentrated around areas where radioactive materials were used or stored en masse. The CorpStates continue to use these dumps for their own radioactive waste, since the pockets can't get much worse, and they are a cheap alternative to proper disposal.

In addition to the radioactive pollutants, the CorpStates also continue to dump industrial and consumer pollutants directly into the Overworld. Some rivers and lakes have died due to the high levels of toxins in the water and the

surrounding land, though most of the water sources have diluted the toxins enough for some creatures to adapt to them. Overworlders have developed purification techniques that make the water drinkable, though not clean. Only CorpState characters and Subearthers suffer penalties when exposed to the Overworld atmosphere. CorpState characters suffer a -2 penalty to abilities and skills, while Subearthers suffer a -1 penalty when directly exposed to the Overworld air. Unlike radiation poisoning, this

effect wears off within a few days, although longer-term effects (such as heart and lung disease) may apply to characters suffering long-term exposure.

In the thick, oxygen poor air of the Overworld, predators have become smaller and more stout. Herbivores (who tend to be more sedentary, less active) have grown larger, with thicker flesh and bone mass. A few examples of predators are given below.

	<u>Creativity</u>	<u>Fitness</u>	<u>Awareness</u>	<u>Luck</u>	<u>Discipline</u>	<u>Gimmicks</u>	<u>Aptitudes</u>
Rat	+1	+1	+3	2	2	Natural Weapons (teeth, claws) Natural Armor	Brawling (expert) Fitness (proficient)
Wild dog		+2	+2	2	4	Natural Weapons (teeth, claws) Natural Armor	Brawling (expert) Fitness (expert)
Lynx (Wild cat)		+3	+3	2	3	Natural Weapons (teeth, claws) Natural Armor	Brawling (expert) Fitness (expert)
Snapping turtle		+1	+4	1	3	Natural Weapons (bite, claws) Natural Armor (A3, B3, C3, D3)	Brawling (proficient)

Rats have grown more cunning, often using complicated tactics to steal (or trap) their food. They prefer dark places, especially underground. Some have been known to burrow beneath their prey, and attack from beneath the ground. They average about one foot in length (from nose to hindquarter). They are immune to the effects of disease, which make them excellent carriers.

Wild dogs tend to travel in packs, and are never seen alone, unless the pack is using one of them as bait. They stand an average of two feet tall at the shoulder. Once they are in a fight, they fight to the death of the last member of the pack. It is very seldom that an entire pack is wiped out.

Lynx (Bobcats) are about one-and-a-half times larger than an average housecat, and can weigh up to 40 pounds, averaging about 25

to 30 pounds. They are stocky, fast, and merciless. They are stealthy hunters, but will try to corner their prey if they are unable to stalk it.

Snapping turtles are patient hunters, one of the few creatures that waits for its prey. They hide in terrain in which they are easily concealed, and wait for their prey to wander too close. These predators can measure up to five feet across. Their hard shells are often used by the Overworlders as shields.

Other creatures exist, changed from their modern counterparts. A small percentage of the Overworld creatures are Metagenic, with special powers and abilities.

SPECIAL CHARACTERS:

THE PILOT AND THE MAN

“The good hunters are lucky. The best hunters make their own luck.”

--one of the mottoes used by The Man

“Luck, schluck. Bomb them into submission.”

--attributed to The Pilot

Two examples of the UNICorp operatives that work against the denizens of the Overworld are known to the Overworlders as The Pilot and The Man. They are the best of the best, highly skilled in what they do.

The Pilot: The presence of The Pilot is enough to keep most Overworlders from taking any actions against UNICorp. The Pilot rains fear and death from above, and is responsible for the elimination of the villages and towns that continue resistance efforts after warnings have been issued to cease. The Pilot strikes from a

sleek black helicopter which is fitted with heavy guns (which may be used to fire either armor penetrating rounds (damage grade: Injury 8, ignores armor up to grade D) or regular rounds (damage grade: Injury 4)) and two banks of eight air-to-surface missiles (damage grade: Injury 8, 50 foot radius). Other light weaponry may be equipped on the helicopter, as well. The Pilot has minimum scores of +4 in Fitness, Awareness, Creativity, and Reasoning. Luck and Discipline are at maximum. Each Pilot is at least Proficient in Brawling, Firearms, Melee, Warfare, Computers, Investigation, Mechanical, Survival, and Martial Arts. They are all Expert in Piloting: All Aircraft.

The Pilot wears a black uniform which covers full-body armor (an advanced synthetic armor, which reduces all damage by three categories). The Pilot's face is covered by a leather-like mask which looks similar to a long, solid veil and pilots goggles. The mask covers the mouthpiece for The Pilot's oxygen mask. The Pilot carries a .45 caliber handgun with a laser sight (damage grade: Injury 4, range categories are reduced by 1) and an Uzi.



(The Pilot. Sketch by a survivor.)

The Man is, in almost every aspect (including Abilities), the same as The Pilot. However, The Man is used primarily to seek out and destroy specific individuals, or small groups. The Man is at least Proficient in Athletics, Brawling, Driving, Firearms, Melee, Warfare, Computers, and Survival. The Man is Expert in Subterfuge, Investigation, and Leadership. The Man has a uniform similar to The Pilot, but The Man does not wear the veil/mask, just the oxygen mask and goggles. The Man also carries a .45 caliber handgun, an Uzi, and a combat knife (damage grade: Injury 1). Where The Pilot strikes from a distance, The Man is more direct about his work.

Both strike fear into Overworlders, which makes those cultures easier to control them and enlist their cooperation against the rebels and raiders. Overworlders seeing The Pilot or The Man suffer a fear penalty. All actions taken are at one difficulty rating higher for two hours. The first three actions taken against either The Pilot or The Man are two difficulty ratings higher. After that, they are at one difficulty rating higher.



(The Man. Sketch by UNICorp public relations designers.)



(Overworld global map, outline of the continents.)

UNICorp North America

During the global environmental and geological changes, landmasses underwent massive changes. Floods, caused by drastic climate changes and the melting of icecaps in the Arctic and Antarctic regions, submersed much of the Mississippi Basin in North America.

Earthquakes along San Andreas caused much of California and the West Coast to break off into an island chain, which later sank as a result of the floods. Only the higher elevations of the East Coast survived, cut off from the mainland by intrusions of the Atlantic Ocean.

UNICorp abandoned the smaller islands created by the shallow sea, and these became pockets of non-UNICorp habitations. On the larger island, UNICorp built corporate farms for growing vegetables and fruits. These products are shipped across the narrow channel, defended from Overworld rebels and raiders by patrol

boats. On the mainland, UNICorp has maintained control of most of the mountainous regions, leaving the lowlands and desert areas to the Overworlders.

Along the coasts and scattered along rivers, Overworlders have built towns and villages. However, in the Death Valley area, southeast across the low hills and flatlands, the region is irradiated from nuclear testing and UNICorp dump sites. A handful of Metagenic humans and creatures are able to survive in that region.

The shallow waters of the former land masses became the home of rather large colonies of seaweeds. The wide seas have become Sargassoes, choked with kelp and other ocean life that has adapted to the polluted waters. There are rumors of great cities filled with wealth under the waters, but the creatures that have moved into the Sargassoes have been able to keep any adventurous souls from leaving the submarine “el Dorados.”

To the gamers:

Thank you for your interest in Slade Stevens' ...Overworld. This is your game.

Slade Stevens' ...Overworld is a campaign setting designed around the idea that Humanity is, essentially, doomed. Big corporations control most of the goods and services, and their leadership controls most of the wealth. They use their power to control governments, whether it's a third-world country trying to survive by exploiting its workers or the most powerful nation on the planet. One is just more overt than the other.

In the game, players may choose to be one of the employees of the single remaining corporation, UNICorp; one of the rebels fighting for the survival of the few remaining humans outside of the biodome fortresses of UNICorp; an altered human, exiled from the walls of UNICorp; or one of the indifferent Subearthers. There are no "classes" or "professions" in the Active Exploits version. We feel that players should be able to develop their own ideal character. The cultures are in place to clarify how the characters are viewed by others on first contact. The setting of the campaign is left open as well. The players and director may choose where to begin the story, whether it's inside of one of UNICorp's CorpStates, beneath the surface in a Subearther complex, or in the harsh environs of Overworld itself. The story is open to many different approaches for the game.

A player might choose to build a Metagenic character who has not yet been discovered by UNICorp. The story would evolve, and eventually revolve around that character's attempts to remain inside the CorpState, or their exile into the Overworld. A different story might begin with a Subearther character investigating the murder of a prominent storyteller or artist, and find its way into the corrupt world of the CorpStates. Maybe a player will choose to be a drifter in the Overworld, and just explore what's left of Humanity in the desolate wastes.

The possibilities are endless.

In the future, we would like to offer expansion packs for the *Slade Stevens' ...Overworld* game setting. We are looking into putting together packs for each of the cultures, including more details about them. Also, continent packs might be offered, giving information about how each continent (and the cultures which inhabited them) changed after the end of the world. Adventures will also be in the works. Let us know what you'd like to see.

We appreciate your interest, and we hope that you'll continue to enjoy the Spider Dreams line of games and accessories. Without you, we wouldn't be here.