

# TECHNOCRACY

## RELOADED

Kickstarter Manuscript Preview 1.0



# Introduction: Storming Utopia

*I'm fascinated by the notion of Civilization as a thin layer of ice resting upon a deep ocean of chaos and darkness.*

— Werner Herzog

*We're losing.*

*Yes, I know what you've been told, kiddies: Our magnificent Union cornered the market on Consensus. Mankind's curled up with their smart phones, everyone loves technology, and cybernetic monkeys fly out my ass on command, raining fire on the poor little sorcerers cowering in the shadows of our magnificent Technocracy.*

*I ask you this: Does it look like we are winning?*

*Irrationality rules the day. Our world unravels at the seams. If our sad-sack species has formed any kind of consensus, it's that cutting off your nose to spite your face is much more fun when you use a chainsaw in public to do it.*

*We're partly to blame for this, you know. We got stupid, careless, so caught up in our own propaganda that we refused to see the infection eating us alive.*

*Worst of all, we got complacent. We believed it would only take a few surgical strikes on the worst offenders, and a wealth of luxuries for the Masses, before humanity would come around and enter a grand age of civil stability.*

*We were wrong.*

*Man is fundamentally irrational. He wants ghosts and vampires and boy wizards with English accents. He wants to believe that genital configurations or melanin production define him as blessed in the eyes of nonexistent gods. He doesn't fear Apocalypse — he craves it, so long as he doesn't have to live personally with the results. He's more fascinated with wanking off in the mirror than with looking toward the horizon of what he could be if he'd just get his hand off his cock.*

*Man cannot be trusted with the future. If we are to have a future, that future must belong to us.*

*Kids, we dropped the ball. Our enemies have it in play, and they're sprinting toward the goalposts.*

*If they score one more time, they win.*

*Our enemies play for keeps.*

*But, so do we.*

*So, get back in the game, my friends, and remove your heads from your asses before we lose it all.*

## Last Best Hope

It began with a promise: An end to mystical tyranny. Haughty wizards felled by arrows. Towers battered by hand-forged cannons. Child-eating hags roasted in the village square or hanged like

twitching mallards from gallows shaped by work-roughened hands. Protection for the common people, they said. Elevation for the arts of *men*, not *magick*.

Somewhere along the way, that promise went bad.

It's not obvious when the well-intentioned Order of Reason went so badly off the rails. By its 20th-century reinvention as the Technocratic Union, though, the promise had ossified into the heartless "black hats and mirrorshades" impression so familiar to the Awakened world. Brutal idealism became mechanized brutality. A Victorian Timetable drove ruthless agendas. Whether or not the rumors of Fallen infiltration were correct, it's hard to see the '90s Technocracy as anything other than an engine of malign totalitarianism.

Unless, of course, you tilt those infamous mirrorshades up a bit and look into the eyes of the people within that Union — people with the hardest job in the World of Darkness, tasked to beat the monsters down and lead humanity — by force, if necessary — into a clean, safe and prosperous future.

This is the Technocratic Utopia: A monster-free bastion of human innovation, achieved through the benevolent management of an Enlightened elite.

The trouble with Utopias is that they always look better in rarefied theory than they do in bloody practice. And the Technocratic Utopia, regardless of its ideals, is drenched in blood and tyranny.

Perhaps, if you were to turn those mirrorshades around and look *into* them instead of *through* them, you might see the monster looking back at you.

That's when the hard work begins: The work of storming your own Utopia to salvage your ideals from the mess they have become.

Welcome, then, to the Technocratic Union at the threshold of the third decade of this 21st century. Neither the shiny monster nor the gleaming knight, but the flawed machine crafted by gifted hands and all-too-human souls of people tasked with illuminating a World of Darkness by all available means.

Welcome to a disunified Union where the future follows unpredictable paths that could lead to majesty or ruin.

Some elements of it seem all-too-familiar.

And others, you've never seen before...

## When the Future Comes to Pass

By the third decade of the 21st century, the Technocracy faces an identity crisis. By and large, humanity has embraced technology; *control*, however, seems an impossible dream. In place of order, we have chaos. Technological toys have made the world crazier than ever. Superstitions ride the airwaves. Virtual clashes shed living blood. Nations burn in cybernetic flames while their leaders pray for godly raptures. The once-rarified reaches of the Digital Web enhance humanity's worst impulses, nature rebels against human excesses, and the once-radical Technocratic Union seems downright quaint. Every calculation for this future has proved wrong. Our world has changed, and the Union must change with it or collapse.

What does such transformation look like, though? Does it involve moderation, reorganization, stricter measures, or total collapse? Must the Technocratic Union be dissolved, and what happens

if it is? Within the five Conventions, a deadly balance of powers and agendas has guided their “union” for over 100 years. If those agendas change and the balance shifts, devastating powers could be unleashed. And so, Technocratic agents face an implacable calculus of movement and effect. Things *cannot* remain as they are within the Technocracy — and yet, each potential change carries a network of consequences too intricate for even the Statisticians of Iteration X to calculate.

What’s an honest Technocrat to *do*? And are the right moves even possible in a society where power and brutality have paved the way for that culture’s existence?

The answers, pros and cons, may be found within your chronicle. This book provides a foundation, but the future is up to you.

## Will the Real Technocracy Please Stand Up?

For **Mage** players and Storytellers, the longtime villains of the game have changed. **Mage**’s debut edition presented the “soulless monolith” of static reality, while **Mage 2nd** began giving the Union a discernible face. **Mage Revised** wrenched that face into a genocidal snarl while tempering the Union’s excesses with emerging moderation. By **Mage 20th Anniversary**, that early monolith cracked into a kaleidoscope of idealistic horrors that mirror the Traditions in all their heroic and perhaps villainous potential.

Which Technocracy, then, are we dealing with here?

Whichever one works best for you.

In the spirit of **M20**’s *Future Fates* approach, the book in your hands (or on your hand-held computer, you futurist, you) features options, not dogma. Despite their association with Stasis, this Technocracy operates in Dynamic fashion. Old patterns must assume new configurations or else succumb to Entropy, and so **Technocracy: Reloaded** portrays a Union in transition. Its ultimate form and function depend upon the wishes of each **Mage** Storyteller, but one thing remains certain: This is not your father’s Technocracy. Even the things you may have thought you knew were if not *wrong*, exactly, then are at the very least limited and incomplete.

Although many features of **Technocracy: Reloaded** remain familiar to longtime **Mage** fans, we’ve approached this book and its material with a broader spectrum than previous books have provided. **Mage 20**’s emphasis on Technocratic player-character options informs every aspect of this book, which provides material for players and Storytellers alike. Within that insider framework, many elements have been left deliberately ambiguous, with the final decision being left to each individual Storyteller. Depending on that Storyteller’s desires, then, the current Technocracy may be:

- A fine idea gone horribly wrong.
- An archaic empire crumbling under its own obsolescence.
- A flawed but necessary bulwark against a world filled with monsters.
- A monstrous paranormal empire with genocidal tendencies and great PR.
- An implacable engine of global domination wherein a few idealists struggle within a totalitarian system.

- An icon of paranoia wherein a wrong move or word might lead to fates far worse than death.
- A vast, corrupt conspiracy in which good principles justify horrendous acts.
- An extremist juggernaut at war within itself.
- A titanic pawn in a Nephandic endgame.
- The last, best hope for human survival.

These possibilities are not, of course, mutually exclusive.

Regardless of its details and direction, this new Technocracy is a creature of the current era. Like the rest of us, it struggles to find its footing in an irrational age. The imperial urge that guided its goals and procedures is as obsolete as a Terminator knock-off. Old Conventions breed new Divisions, and each agent must ultimately decide for themselves which ideals are worth fighting for and which may be — often *must* be — discarded for the sake of future survival. Those who cannot and will not adapt find themselves melted down for scrap or stuck off in a remote corner to rust. In a new century deranged by the very things that were supposed to bring order and conformity, old data must be reloaded, updated, and often purged.

Speaking of data...

## Disputed Data, Future Fates, and Supplemental Data

Throughout this book, you'll find three types of sidebars:

***Disputed Data*** sidebars describe different perspectives of the Technocracy as it's been "officially" portrayed in **Mage: The Ascension** lore. The brutal impression offered in certain sourcebooks may or may not be an accurate perception of the Union as seen from within its own ranks; likewise, the "kindlier, gentler" Technocracy postulated in various sourcebooks could be a deception masking something far more vicious. Disputed Data sidebars, like the Future Fates mentioned below, describe Technocratic lore that might not be accurate in your **Mage** chronicle.

***Future Fates*** sidebars, as shown throughout the **Mage 20** series, mention pivotal events in history and metaplot, typically while presenting three different options to choose from. For example, certain sourcebooks assert that the Union massacred thousands of Crafts mages and their allies, and/or suffered profound damage and transition during the Dimensional Anomaly; other sourcebooks ignore or dismiss those allegations, or else offer an ambiguous metaplot where those things may or may not have occurred.

Ultimately, each **Mage 20** Storyteller is the final arbiter of what did and did not happen in their chronicle. These sidebars address things that may or may not be true in yours.

***Supplemental Data*** sidebars contain references to material in other books. This sourcebook, large as it is, builds upon material presented in **Mage 20**, **The Book of Secrets**, and other publications, so in order to avoid redundancy and keep the word count down, certain sidebars refer our readers to those other books.

### Retronocracy?

Past-era futurism has not aged well. Thus, the Technocracy of the 1990s seems positively retro. **Technocracy: Reloaded** updates, possibly reorganizes, the Big Bad of earlier editions into a sleek Union that changes with the times, has

previously unseen dimensions, and is far more sympathetic (though it's still formidable) than old **Mage** fans might previously have believed possible.

To that end, we're going to drop some sacred cows into a shredder, contradict outdated material, and present 21st-century data for a group that, if it were real, would keep changing and adapting despite its supposedly static nature.

Our world moves onward, and so does the Technocracy.

Where's that Damn Pretentious "K"?

Readers may notice that this book does not use the usual k-based spelling of *magick*. That's because the Technocracy doesn't give a fuck about magic. Unit 5 deals with **M20** rule-systems, so we *do* use the "k" spelling in that chapter, for consistency's sake. Other than that, don't expect any Crowleyesque foolishness in **Technocracy: Reloaded**, citizen. That's superstitionist rubbish, and you know better than to trust that sort of thing by now.

## Foundation Principles

At its core, the Technocratic Union (and its earlier incarnation, the Order of Reason) maintains two foundation principles: *Enlightenment* and *control*. The first principle guides flawed beings toward ultimate perfection, while the second principle asserts discipline over a monstrous cosmos. Many of the Union's apparent contradictions are best understood through these essential principles; if, in fact, Fallen corruptors have turned the Technocracy into an Extinction Level Entity, those corruptors still use the Union's core principles to undermine its stated goals.

## Enlightened Advancement

Despite its mechanical allure, the Technocracy does not pursue science for its own sake. Technocratic researchers explore the applications of scientific technology for many reasons, including curiosity about the way our cosmos functions. The guiding purpose of such research, however, involves understanding the capacities of Enlightened humanity, the limits of earthly potential, and the ways in which a significantly advanced elite can use the first to expand the second.

The five modern Technocratic Conventions serve an array of purposes. Among them, the most important — though least obvious — purposes include five distinct, though interrelated, approaches to human Enlightenment and the advancement of our species:

- Iteration X approaches Enlightenment by upgrading the physical body.
- The Progenitors seek Enlightenment by evolving the biological form.
- The New World Order seeks Enlightenment by advancing a unified and controlled consciousness.
- The Syndicate seeks Enlightenment through upgrading the human material condition through social and economic means.
- The Void Engineers seek Enlightenment through satisfying curiosity and advancing human knowledge and influence into unknown regions.

These paths toward deeper understanding and accomplishment inspire the tools, beliefs and practices inherent in each group. Although it's hard, if not impossible, to see those paths from the outside (especially if you're staring at your own reflection on a Black Suit's mirrorshades or a cyborg's metallic skin), the ideals within each Convention express that group's vision of transcendence of human limits in an effort to achieve sublime perfection. This provides the backbone of each Enlightened operative's faith in the Union's mission and each Convention's place within the whole.

"Faith" sounds like a funny word to use in reference to the Technocracy. Even in the 21st century, when the Union's attempts at imposed atheism have given way to a tolerance for slight spiritual inclinations, we don't often associate the Technocracy with ephemeral things like faith. Any mage, however, realizes that faith is the bedrock of conviction — and conviction, in turn, makes all things possible for a mage. Technocrats, of course, seldom, if ever, refer to themselves by such Deviant words; in meta terms, however, an Enlightened Technocrat *is* a mage, and no matter which faction your character prefers, **Mage** is literally the name of the game.

## Control and Command

Warm-and-fuzzy terminology aside, the Technocracy *is* an engine of control. Gods, men and Nature are far too random and chaotic to be given freedom. Therefore, the Union's goal is bridling chaos and steering humanity's future toward something other than impending extinction.

Technocracy agents have seen first-hand just how absurd this cosmos is. Union operatives fight undead corpses and pandimensional godlings as a matter of course, and so the pleasant delusions of security in this world are for other people, not for them. Though it might be true that certain operatives *serve* that existential chaos instead of countering it, the Technocracy's official stance involves a protective parental role — a harsh one, at times, and usually a thankless one, but a sincere ideal of control nonetheless.

The five modern Conventions strive to control the following all-too-random factors:

- Iteration X instills flawed systems with mathematical precision.
- The Progenitors purge the flaws of physical design through a constant process of controlled evolution.
- The New World Order adjusts broken institutions and restless thoughts into controllable patterns and mindful discipline.
- The Syndicate governs the flux of economic commerce and the whims of human materialism.
- The Void Engineers expose hidden things while also hiding things best unseen by lesser minds.

That's the theory, anyway. Reality, of course, takes a different course. That fact doesn't keep dedicated Technocrats from pursuing those goals with a firm, often frightening, sense of purpose.

## Themes: Power, Progress, Corruption, and Extremity

How can a bunch of 1990s future-shock concepts remain relevant in 2020 and beyond? As specific elements move with the times, certain themes remain vital and consistent within our Technocracy.

## Power

**Power** is the Union's greatest strength and weakness. Technocrats command unprecedented power, especially in the current age. From financial wealth to military might to their global influence on the Masses' hearts and minds, the Technocracy is the most obviously powerful faction of the Ascension Wars. That kind of power is cool; as Brian Campbell points out in **Mage 20**, it lets you play with the coolest toys on the biggest stage imaginable — so long as you keep playing, that is, by their rules.

Yet power is also their downfall, because the Union's foundation depends upon asserting the power of unified technology (material and otherwise) under the dominion of an enlightened elite. By definition, the Technocratic Union cannot share power or trust such power to parties outside its ranks. Richard the Lionheart's declaration that "Power is the only fact" is gospel to the Technocracy. As a result, the Union has a long history of cutting its own throat while demolishing anyone standing in the way of its domination.

## Progress

Technology changes the world, and the world changes technology. Although the Technocratic Union strives for perfect understanding and control, most Technocrats also realize that progress involves forward motion, not the stasis they're so often associated with. Although Tradition mages assert that their supposedly soulless rivals seek to freeze Creation in an unyielding block of metaphysical ice, Union operatives know that science and technology move humanity forward. Progress, then, is both an essential ethos for the group and a historical fact of their existence...

...so long as said "progress" remains under the Technocracy's control, of course. Progress without discipline or limits is dangerous, even catastrophic. And so, the Union continues to press toward a controlled sort of progress, not the freewheeling feel-good chaos embraced by the Traditions. Yes, any Technocrat will tell you, progressive change *is* a desirable end. In order for there to be progress, however, there needs to be control. Humanity has proven itself to be incapable of such discipline, and rival mages are even worse. True Reality Deviants (Marauders, Nephandi, most Tradition and Disparate mages, and pretty much every other creature of the night) are actually *regressive*, striving to return humanity to a primal state of fear and bondage. In that light, the Technocracy, not the Traditions, remains the true source of progress in this world. Everyone else keeps dragging it back into the dark.

As noted throughout **Mage 20**, **The Book of Secrets**, and **Guide to the Technocracy**, the Union actually *is* progressive in many respects. Back when women and foreigners were considered subhuman at best (and, more often, fodder for the nearest bonfire), the Order of Reason affirmed the potential wisdom of any suitably Enlightened soul, regardless of culture, gender or creed. While various Traditions still wrangle with issues of gender, culture and faith, the Technocratic Union has a strict policy (not always enforced, of course) that bigotry within the ranks is forbidden. Two of the Union's most luminary leaders — Isabella of Castile and Queen Victoria — were women at a time when women were often barred from ranks higher than "wife of the king and mother of his children." Although it's been downplayed in previous editions, the Technocracy's history and crafts are as rooted in China, India, and the Muslim world as they are in the imperial legacy of Western Europe. As the colonial era fades into ancient history, the true face of technological progress — Enlightened and otherwise — becomes clear.



## Corruption

Despite its best intentions, the Technocracy does a lot of truly evil shit. The prosperity it offers has a price that's paid by everyone who opposes it, many people who work for it, and those who don't even know it exists. The Union's history is bloody as hell, and that "black hats" impression didn't come from nowhere. Power corrupts, they say, and if the Technocracy's ideals are Utopian — and they *are* — then the power to craft such Utopia has corrupted those ideals, perhaps beyond redemption.

Is the Technocracy externally corrupted (as in, infiltrated by the Nephandi, as has been suggested in several sourcebooks)? Or is that extremity solely on the Union's head? Regardless of the metaplot behind an individual **Mage** Storyteller's game, the Technocracy remains guilty of genocide, fratricide, xenocide, and more. Even in its most sympathetic light, the Union is an authoritarian regime for which the ends most certainly justify the means. From a sympathetic angle, this makes a certain degree of sense; after all, we're talking about an organization dedicated to saving humanity from vampiric predators, rampaging man-beasts, demented sorcerers, malignant aliens, and its own enduring stupidity. What is one life, a thousand lives, even a million lives, when compared to extinction-level events? And make no mistake — the Technocracy *is* preventing extinction-level events. Part of the drama inherent in a Technocracy-centered chronicle comes from the epic stakes involved. Technocrats *are* trying to rule reality, yes — in order to save it from itself. However corrupt the organization may have become, that ideal is common ground between almost every Technocrat alive.

"Almost every Technocrat" because the Union just *might* be infested with extinction-minded infiltrators; if it *is*, though, then that infestation has grown from the very real mentality of saving the human world, regardless of the cost. The worst sorts of corruption grow from ideals that have been ironically perverted but never actually lost.

Beneath ruthless yet understandable ideals, there's the lure of petty corruption too: financial greed, smug superiority, personal pride, social elitism, the simple pleasures of luxury and really cool stuff, and so on down the line. Technocrats are disciplined, yes, but they're still human, and human beings enjoy cool stuff and a sense (totally accurate, in their case) that they are indeed superior to most, if not all, other human beings. Beneath their sleek exterior, Technocratic operatives remain convinced that their Union is the last, best hope humanity could wish for. Sure, that tends to make them callous, arrogant, even apparently sociopathic by other standards of humanity. When you know you're the best at what you do, though, and you know for an endlessly proven fact that you actually *do* stand between the Masses and their utter annihilation, then the moral compass that guides other people really doesn't apply to you — does it?

Who's to say that's "corruption," anyway?

If you need real-world analogs, just look at what real Americans, Russians, cops, CEOs, Christian fundamentalists, Islamic State soldiers, and all their many supporters justify on a daily basis when their ideals come into conflict with other people's lives. The ultimate horror inherent in the Technocracy (and really, in **Mage** in general) is that real people in real nations *already* justify genocide, racism, torture, rape, pollution, atrocity, even the ultimate agonized extinction of "those people" while remaining convinced — with evidence to back it up — that they're still the Good Guys in the story of our world.

## Extremity

No matter how we might sympathize with the Technocratic agents and ideals, no matter how sexy and fun we make them, the Technocratic Union employs extreme measures on an essentially daily basis.

These are folks who clone people so they can erase dissent; who torture even their own members to obtain information and compel obedience; who sell drugs, upend economies, manipulate markets, blackmail potential rivals or converts, wipe minds, install memories, rewrite history, conceal data, create killer robots and hybrid human monsters, and generally wrap reality in knots when it suits their purposes to do so. This isn't propaganda — it's the way the Union works. The old saying *Extremity in the service of liberty is no vice* is a minor variation on the Technocratic code: *Extremity in the service of reality is no excess*.

What, then, does “extremity” really mean, especially when you might be on one side of the gun one day and the other side of that same gun tomorrow?

## How to Use This Book

Divided into two sections, **Program 1: General Access Data** and **Program 2: Restricted Access Data**, this sourcebook presents material for both players in general (Program 1) and Storytellers alone (Program 2). Any reader, of course, may access the second section if she likes, but might find spoilers therein.

Beyond the **Prelude** and this **Introduction**, **Technocracy: Reloaded** contains:

- **Unit 1: The Operative's Handbook** provides an introduction to the Union on a personal level — or at least one as “personal” as the Technocracy allows itself to be.
- **Unit 2: Targets, Assets, Tactics, and Plans** describes how and why Technocratic operatives fight the good fight.
- **Unit 3: Theatres of Operation** explores the Technocracy's global operations in the 21st century world.
- **Unit 4: Internal Matters** features information about the Technocracy's inner workings and the policies that govern that organization and its diverse membership.
- **Unit 5: Q Division** displays an array of hypertechn procedures and toys for the agent on the go.
- **Unit 6: Human Resources** collects characters and templates for Technocratic storylines.
- **Unit 7: Mission Control** advises a **Mage** Storyteller about potential tactics and techniques when dealing with the Union and its operatives.
- **Unit 8: The Parallax View** reveals potential metaplots for the Technocratic Union, some of which may shake the foundations of the world of Darkness itself.

As befits an organization whose entire existence involves rewriting reality in a controllable impression, **Technocracy: Reloaded** includes hosts of contradictions, inverted expectations, and potential “truths” that may or may not be “true” from different perspectives.

One of the first contradictions a member of the Union must confront is the gulf between an ideal of singular, controlled, formalized reality and the multiperceptual, chaotic, messy realities that actually exist once you leave theory on the whiteboard and step out onto the street. As a member of an organization whose existence depends upon balancing several realities at once while

insisting that only one reality is “real,” a Technocratic operative navigates a hall of mirrors while staring at a fixed point and declaring that point to be the only one that matters. That operative might not ever use the Deviant term “mage” to refer to herself, but in a world filled with such apparent contradictions, that’s exactly what she is: a living contradiction of a mage.

## Media Inspirations

The following media inspirations give insight into both playing as a Technocrat and running games based around the Technocracy.

### Books, Fiction

Ben Aaronovitch (*Rivers of London*)

Issac Asimov (*The Caves of Steel*, “I, Robot”)

Iain M. Banks (*The Player of Games*)

Max Barry (*Jennifer Government*, *Company*, *Machine Man*, “Attack of the Supermodels,” “A Shade Less Perfect”)

G.K. Chesterton (*The Man Who Was Thursday*)

Bret Easton Ellis (*American Psycho*)

Cory Doctorow (*Little Brother*, *Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom*)

Harlan Ellison (“‘Repent, Harlequin!’ Said the Ticktockman,” “Soldier,” *Mefisto in Onyx*, “I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream”)

Neil Gaiman (*A Study in Emerald*)

Mira Grant, AKA Seanan McGuire (*Feed*, *Parasite*, and the other *Newsflesh* and *Parasitology* novels and collections)

Joe Haldeman (*The Forever War*)

Robert A. Heinlein (*Starship Troopers*, *Friday*, *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*)

Joseph Heller (*Catch-22*)

Franz Kafka (*The Trial*)

Maurice Leblanc (*Arsène Lupin*, *Gentleman-Thief*)

Ursula K. Le Guin, (*The Lathe of Heaven*)

Seanan McGuire (*Middlegame*)

Ramez Naam, (the *Nexus* trilogy)

China Mieville (*Perdido Street Station*)

George Orwell (*1984*, *Animal Farm*)

### Books, Nonfiction

*Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*, and *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*, both by Neil Postman

*Ancient Inventions: Wonders of the Past!* by Peter James and Nick Thorpe

*As the Future Catches You: How Geonomics & Other Forces are Changing Your Life, Work, Health & Wealth*, by Juan Enriquez

*A Secret History of Consciousness*, *Dark Star Rising: Magick and Power in the Age of Trump*, and *Politics and the Occult: The Left, the Right, and the Radically Unseen*, all by Gary Lachman

*Biocentricism: How Life and Consciousness are the Keys to Understanding the True Nature of the Universe*, by Robert Lanza, MD, with Bob Berman

*Concise History of the World (National Geographic)*, edited by Neil Kagen

*The Cuckoo's Egg*, by Clifford Stoll

*The Cult of Information: A Neo-Luddite Treatise on High-Tech, Artificial Intelligence, and the True Art of Thinking*, by Theodore Roszak

*The Dark Net: Inside the Digital Underworld*, and *Radicals Chasing Utopia: Inside the Rogue Movements Trying to Change the World*, both by Jamie Bartlett

*From Dawn to Decadence: 500 Years of Western Cultural Life*, by Jacques Barzun

*Gravitation and Spacetime*, by John Archibald Wheeler

*Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*, by Jared Diamond

*The Holographic Universe: The Revolutionary Theory That Explains Everything*, by Michael Talbot

*Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow*, and *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*, both by Yuval Noah Harari

*The Infinite Resource: The Power of Ideas on a Finite Planet* and *More Than Human: Embracing the Promise of Biological Enhancement*, both by Ramez Naam

*Information Doesn't Want to be Free: Laws for the Internet Age*, by Cory Doctorow

*The Medical Book: From Witch Doctors to Robot Surgeons*, by Clifford A. Pickover

*The Technological Society*, by Jacques Ellul

*Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy*, by Cathy O'Neil

*What if*, by Randall Munroe

*Wired* magazine (an influence on **Mage** since the game's inception)

*The World: An Illustrated History*, edited by Geoffrey Parker

## TV Programs

*Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.*, *Altered Carbon*, *Android Kikaider* and *Kikaider 01*, *Archer*, *The Avengers*, *Black Lightning*, *Cloak & Dagger*, *Connections*, *Daredevil*, *Dollhouse*, *Eureka*, *The Expanse*, *Fringe*, *House of Cards*, *Hustle*, *Jessica Jones*, *Kamen Rider Gaim*, both *La Femme Nikita* (1990s version) and *Nikita* (2010-2013 version), *Luke Cage*, *Mad Men*, *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.*, *The Middleman*, *Mr. Robot*, *Orphan Black*, *Person of Interest*, *The Prisoner*, *Profit*, *Punisher*, *Runaways*, *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, *Stargate SG1*, *Stranger Things*, *Succession*,

*Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles, Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan, Torchwood, Utopia, Westworld, The X-Files*

## Movies

Aliens and Alien: Resurrection, Avatar, All of the Avengers films, AI, Batman: The Dark Knight, Black Panther, Contact, The Corporation, Dark City, Deadpool and Deadpool 2, Dredd, Enemy of the State, Enthiran, Equilibrium, Event Horizon, Ex Machina, Frankenstein's Army, Gattaca, Ghostbusters (all of them), Ghost in The Shell, Gravity, Hardcore Henry, Hellboy, Her, Inception, Iron Man 1-3 John Wick 1-3, Jurassic Park, Kikaider Reboot, Kingsman: The Secret Service, Kingsman: The Golden Circle and The King's Man, Logan, Lucy, the Matrix trilogy, Men in Black and Men in Black: International, Moon, Pacific Rim and Pacific Rim: Uprising, the recent Planet of the Apes films, The Raid: Redemption and The Raid 2: Barandal, Robocop (original, please), Splice, Spy Kids, Spy Time, Starship Troopers, Suicide Squad, The Terminator and Terminator 2: Judgement Day, Thank You for Smoking, THX-1138, Tinker Tailor, Soldier Spy, The Truman Show, Upgrade, Wall Street, Wicked City, The Wolverine, and pretty much every James Bond movie ever (except the one with Woody Allen).

## Technocratic Lexicon

Although most Technocratic terminology can be found in **Mage 20** (pp. 30-33), certain terms are new, have been altered by recent events, or feature more prominently in **Technocracy**:

**Reloaded.** These terms and phrases include:

**Adjustment:** A subtle or coincidental act of Enlightened Science.

**Anthropic Principle Theory, the:** Proposed (in real life) by Brandon Carter in 1973, this theory asserts that: 1) humanity's position in the universe is privileged enough that we can act as observers within it, and so... 2) this universe must therefore be compatible with our existence and our ability to observe its principles. The first observation is known as the *Weak Anthropic Principle*, and the second as the *Strong Anthropic Principle*. In **Mage**, both mystic and tech-focused mages realized a variation on this Principle millennia ago, though they refer to it in different ways, and have squabbled over how best to use their especially privileged talent for *altering* that universe, as opposed to simply observing it. (See **Enlightened Anthropic Field Theory, the**.)

**Black Dagger:** Elite stealth-unit Black Suits with devastating psychic assault capabilities. (See **IECSSC**.)

**Black Suit protocol:** The NWO practice of training new members as identically dressed and groomed Black Suits, regardless of gender or ethnicity, in order to foster a sense of collective identity and a subtly menacing presence.

**cc-amalgam:** A cross-Convention amalgam — a mission group featuring at least one team member from each of the five Conventions.

**Doctrine of Mutuality, the:** The core ethic of behavior among Technocratic operatives. Ideally, mutual behavior benefits the Technocracy as a whole, while unmutual behavior undermines the integrity of the whole.

**Enlightened Anthropic Field Theory, the:** Technocratic theory positing that sentient beings (usually, but not necessarily, human ones) determine the shape and nature of our universe. Under

this theory, the sleeping Masses determine reality unconsciously, while Enlightened humans (and other beings) have both the ability to determine it consciously and the responsibility to do so for the greater good. Those who abuse that responsibility are therefore Reality Deviants, because they choose to alter the universe for selfish reasons rather than for the greater good — a greater good that is, of course, determined by the Technocracy. (See *Anthropic Principle Theory, the.*)

**field op/Field Op:** A common phrase with two distinct but related meanings: lower-cased, *field op* is short for “field operative” — an agent working in the field, as opposed to in an office, lab, or distant construct. Capitalized, *Field Op* is short for “field operations,” which are the sorts of missions a field operative goes on in the field. (See also, **CTA: FO.**)

**Gandalf:** A sneering reference to mystic mages. (See also **Harry/Hermione.**)

**Harry/Hermione:** An inexperienced but potentially dangerous young mage.

**Holographic Universe Theory, the:** The concept that the universe we experience is a “flat” and limited information structure imprinted on lower energies of the universe’s gravitational horizon. The real-world version of this theory involves string theory and complex mathematical principles; certain **Mage** paradigms assert that “reality” as we experience it is essentially a projection of natural and perhaps anthropic principles, and thus is subject to alteration by people Enlightened and educated enough to understand and manipulate those principles. (See *Enlightened Anthropic Field Theory, the.*)

**low light/low lighter:** A freshly initiated Enlightened operative, so named because that person is “en-lightened” but not yet terribly bright. Mildly derogatory, the term is typically used by upper-tier Technocrats who aren’t terribly susceptible to complaints from the lower ranks.

**Master’s Edge, the:** A combination of confidence and style practiced by Black Suits and Syndicate operatives; done properly, it’s effective enough to break a target’s spirit just by walking into a room.

**Matrix-Invested Operatives:** Living beings invested with Quintessential energy; in mystic parlance, Soulflowers. (See *MIO.*)

**Operative/operative:** Standard-issue name for Enlightened Technocratic personnel. Often capitalized in older applications (especially among the NWO) but typically lower-cased in current terminology.

**Overton Window, the:** Named for Joseph P. Overton, who postulated that an idea’s viability depends on whether the public finds it abnormal or unthinkable. It describes a range of ideals that the majority of a population finds acceptable. Here, it’s used to describe the edges where PSYOPs operate.

**Procedure:** a blatant or vulgar act of Enlightened Science.

**prodigy:** A young operative raised and trained within the Technocracy, either from birth or from early childhood onward. Not all prodigies are Enlightened, but all are considered T1 operatives until they Awaken. After adolescence ends, the ones that do not become Enlightened remain extraordinary citizens for life, but are no longer referred to as prodigies.

**terrannorming:** The process of establishing a localized Consensus by setting up appropriate ideas and then reinforcing them with combinations of charity, technology and force until the local populace accepts the desired idea.

**‘tis full:** The spoken version of the acronym *TISFL*: (the) *Technocracy IS For Life*. An expression that recognizes the stark reality that you can’t simply quit the Technocratic Union.

**Virtual Agents:** Technocratic operatives existing only on the Digital Web; personified programs with discernible identities. Named, in part, as a mockery of the Virtual Adept Tradition.

## CTA: Common Technocratic Acronyms

The Union loves its acronyms. Especially in the 21st century, Technocratic protocols and targets are often condensed into English-language acronyms that often express subtle, sarcastic critiques of the subject at hand. CTAs include (but are not limited to):

**6TP:** The Six-Tier Pyramidal structure of Technocratic Rank.

**AAR:** After-Actions Review — a post-mission overview of how well or poorly things went during the mission, focusing on what agents did right and potential improvements for subsequent operations.

**AFET:** Acceptable Force Escalation Threshold — the amount of force authorized for a given target and/or mission.

**AO:** Area of Operations — the staging and performance zone for a field mission.

**AW:** Asset Weaponization — determining which assets to use on a mission.

**BRQ:** Baseline Reality Quantum — that is, an unEnlightened human. (See *PRA*.)

**CCC:** Cleanup, Containment, and Compensation — the process of minimizing and repairing damage inflicted on a mission zone, making sure the damage and aftermath doesn’t spread outside the *AO*, and compensating innocent bystanders whose lives and property have been impacted by Technocratic operations. Considered a costly but necessary step in securing and maintaining Consensus among the Masses.

**CI:** Collateral Impact — the amount of damage and death inflicted on civilian life and infrastructure as a result of Technocratic operations. Something to be avoided as much as possible, if only because cleanup is a bitch.

**CLE:** Civilian Law Enforcement — cops who are not part of the Technocracy’s ranks or affiliates.

**CMURD:** Craft-Affiliated Magic-Using Reality Deviant — a mage from one of the Disparate Crafts.

**DOM:** The Doctrine of Mutuality (see *Lexicon*, above).

**DTFT:** Designated Target Force Threshold — the amount of force expected to deal with an expected target.

**FO:** Field Op(eration)

**HE:** Hemophagic Entity — a vampire.

**HOAR:** The Hierarchy of Assets & Resources

**HSKIN:** Holy Shit Kill It Now — a Marauder, Nephandus, or other malignant yet powerful mage considered too dangerous for anything except immediate termination.

**IECSSC:** Infiltrations / Exfiltration Covert Strike Specialist Corps, AKA the **Black Daggers**.

**IG:** Information Gathering Operations

**JMARD:** Juxtapositional Manifestation Paraconsciousness Reality Deviants — ghosts.

**MIO:** Matrix-Invested Operatives

**MURD:** Magic-Using Reality Deviant — a mage.

**NAMURD:** Non-Affiliated Magic-Using Reality Deviant; a mage with no obvious associations to another faction — an orphan.

**NEI:** Neglect, Error, Intent — an evaluation technique to determine how to correct unwanted behavior.

**OPTEMPO:** Operational tempo — a “productivity quota” that measures the number of missions a given operative or team accomplishes per fiscal quarter. Managers and planners live by OPTEMPO quotas. Field operatives know OPTEMPO is bullshit.

**PC:** Precious Cargo — something (or someone) that is the target of a mission.

**PDE:** Pan-Dimensional Entities — possibly aliens, or just weird stuff that defies explanation.

**PEE:** Paradox-Effect Entity, also referred to as **PEM** (Paradox-Effect Manifestation) by Managers and operatives who can’t bring themselves to use the official tag. Despite protests to change the designation, PEE remains the acronym employed in most Technocratic archives and operations. Even Mirrorshades need a chuckle now and then.

**PRA:** Potential Reality Assets — unEnlightened humans whose beliefs define the strictures of Consensus. (See **BRQ**.)

**PTMURD:** Potentially Talented Magic-Using Reality Deviant — a potential mage not yet Awakened but showing every indication of Awakening soon. In short, an ideal recruit.

**RAN:** Repeat as Needed

**RDE:** Reality Deviant Episode; a synonym for **RDI**, below.

**RDI:** Reality Deviant Incident. Depending on whom you ask the “I” might also stand for Incursion, Invasion, or Insurgency.

**REMURD:** Random Element Magic-Using Reality Deviant— a mage or hedge magician with no clear affiliations and unknown powers and identity.

**RoE:** Rules of Engagement

**RP:** Rally Point — the place where field ops gather.

**RSP:** Req Spec Phase — time before a mission to request new gear.

**SAMETO Protocol:** Some Animals More Equal Than Others — a sarcastic and unmutual reference to the HOAR.

**S&C:** Secure & Contain

**SDS:** The Six Degrees of Separation

**SSP:** Secure Scene Protocols — Secure / Stabilize / Contain / Deny.



**TAMURD:** Tradition Affiliated Magic-Using Reality Deviant — a mage associated with the Nine Traditions.

**TBE:** TinkerBell Entities — faeries.

**TE:** Target Exploitation — determine a target's weaknesses.

**TI:** Target Identification — determine your target in an IGO.

**TISFL:** (the) Technocracy IS For Life (See '**tis full.**)

**UC:** Unenlightened Citizen/Civilian

**VHS:** Van HelsingS — civilians who are amateur monster hunters.

**XMDD:** eXtraordinary Material Distribution Database

# Program 1: General Access Data

*In the past, the man was first; in the future, the system must be first.*

— Frederick Winslow Taylor, *The Principles of Scientific Management*

## Unit 1: The Operative's Handbook

*"You lost another one, Stephen?"*

*"Yes, sir. I'm sorry, sir."*

*"What happened?"*

*"Same as last time, sir. Even after all the... er, education he's received, he wasn't willing to give up contact with his family and friends. Specifically, he sees himself as having a responsibility for their well-being, and doesn't believe that abdicating it would contribute to the greater good."*

*"I... see."*

*Stephen would be surprised if his supervisor had said otherwise. After all, it's the old man's job to see everything. "It's a shame, sir" Stephen answers. "He would have been stellar as an operative. He received top scores in all his testing."*

*"You have a point?"*

*"Well... yes, sir. To my own knowledge, our department alone has lost at least eight trainees just within the past five years. From conversations with members of other departments, this isn't an unusual rate of failure. We're devoting significant resources to recruitment and training, then losing some of our best candidates... and all to the same general issue. I believe we need to start looking into solutions. What we're doing now is inefficient and wasteful, and the mission is suffering because of it."*

*The manager looked at Stephen over his steepled fingers, tapping them together thoughtfully. After several long moments, he turned slightly and started typing.*

*"I'm cutting you new orders. I need to see data. How many trainees we're losing each year, split out by department, at what point in their training, the reasons they're giving for leaving, and the accumulated costs for these failures. Have the report completed in one week."*

*Stephen knows better by now than to hesitate. "Yes, sir."*

## From Us, To You

Welcome, operative.

If you're reading these words, and you have the proper security clearance to understand them, you've obviously been accepted as an Enlightened agent within the Technocratic Union. Congratulations! If you don't yet have the proper security clearance, don't worry. Remain exactly where you are. Operatives are being dispatched to your location to help you transition into the next stage of your existence.

Before we release you back into the Front Lines to save the world, your local HR department has a few guidelines for your careful consideration, so we can ensure you don't stray from the straight and narrow path. As the author of the *Orange HR Handbook* for Construct Orange, I've

been asked to summarize our HR procedures for agents on similar Constructs. You may feel some slight anxiety about reading this document, but you can relax. You won't be tested at the end of it. No, you'll go about your business for a month or two, and then you'll have random quizzes as part of our *Internal Loyalty Review Program* (ILRP). If you've got nothing to hide, you've got nothing to fear. Whether you're destined to hunt Reality Deviants or work behind the scenes, remember that your friends in HR have your back.

## Establishing Consensus

First and foremost, you must remember the following:

*Reality*, as we know it, is formed by the collective belief of humanity. Billions of people define the boundaries of Consensual Reality; the world you see around you on Earth is the world mankind wants. Seven billion people look up at the sky each day and know it should be blue (even when it's a little gray and rainy). Seven billion people instinctively know that gravity works. The parameters of our universe are consistent with conditions for life as we know it — the universe sentient humans observe and inhabit — and, according to Anthropic Field Theory, human consciousness directs the flow of Earthly phenomena. Consensual Reality is the reason for everything we see and experience around us.

In the world of our Union, we know this is true because we have seen people who want an alternative: individuals who defy and deviate from this Consensus. Reality Deviants rework and reshape the world around themselves through sheer force of will, for better or for worse. When all things are possible, whenever one person defies the collective belief of over seven billion people, it's usually for the worse. If one person who believes that magic is real summons a dragon in the heart of Manhattan, you know what happens next: Nothing good. Both humanity and reality actively resist that deviant act. That's why the Paradox Effect exists.

Hidden from humanity, monstrous creatures lurk in the shadows, and they know their survival depends on secrecy. The vast majority of humans don't believe in the existence of creatures like werewolves or ghosts, so the world has forces to make sure they remain hidden. Enlightened agents can predict the activity of paranormal creatures with a high degree of certainty and monitor them when that's necessary. Except in times of crisis, they are not our highest concern. Humanity has other occult forces to worry about: enemies they can neither detect nor fully oppose. Entire occult societies exist to keep these horrors hidden, and for every danger we see, even greater ones exist.

"Magick," as they refer to it, is, in its most potent form, one of the greatest threats to human existence. Defying reality, one individual can do the impossible. That defiance carries a risk: reality can strike back. Witnesses accumulate. Paradoxes manifest. Belief itself is challenged. Humans remain asleep and dreaming of a world where magic does not exist, but when those sleepers awaken, innocent citizens get hurt. While the Masses find the fictional forms of "movie magic" entertaining, and while they may serve as acceptable and profitable safety valve for oblivious minds, true Reality Deviance is dangerous. Thus, it must be suppressed, controlled, converted or, in some cases, destroyed.

Agent, we know that you do not look to the past. We know that you accept the present, and you share our vision for the future. When you act, you protect humanity from madmen and monsters. You work to build a reality where men and women can be masters of their own world. You must be subtle. You must be unseen. You must keep those ordinary citizens safe.

Fortunately, we have our own strengths: Unity, purpose, galvanizing ideals, a sense of responsibility, and technology that's decades ahead of what the rest of humanity possesses. When we act, we don't turn back the clock. The more we use our Enlightened technology, the more powerful and possible our technology becomes. Eventually, what we envision and create will be accessible by all of humanity. Ordinary men and women then become masters of their own world while our Union continues to march towards tomorrow. We're always innovating our advanced technology, and we're leading the way to the future.

#### Disputed Data: Magic, Monsters, Paradox, and Human Belief

According to official Technocratic policy, most human beings do not believe in magic or monsters. The Paradox Effect is a protective reflex of the *Enlightened Anthropic Field Theory* (detailed in **Mage 20**, p. 93), and thus asserts human will over Reality Deviant behavior. Technocratic procedures and hypertechnology, therefore, enforce the desires of human belief, bringing about the reality most human beings want.

That's nonsense on many levels. For starters, most human beings *do* believe in magic and monsters, always have, and probably want to do so, if only because those concepts explain a lot of things people don't want to think about too deeply. It could be argued that Paradox and other forces shelter and nurture such phenomena because humanity *desires* them, perhaps in the Jungian shadow-side of consciousness that cloaks undesirable elements from open recognition. Paradox could be a protective reflex that slaps *too much* magick back into line, but magick, regardless of what the Technocracy might say, has always been acceptable, if not always admissible, part of human belief.

Off the books, the Technocracy knows this too.

Technocratic claims of reality domination, though possibly true in terms of their influence upon mortal technology, are vastly overstated. Even in our real world, the vast majority of people believe in supernatural phenomena — gods, ghosts, spirits, demons, and other paranormal forces; imagine how many *more* people would believe in them (and believe more strongly in them than we do) in a world where parasitic supercorpses and lycanthropic killing machines are real. The Technocracy may enjoy a stronger hold on modern paradigms than their witch-and-wizard counterparts, but that hold comes at a price few Technocrats openly admit: Their Enlightened hypertechnology is just as susceptible to the Paradox Effect as any mystic's magick spells — just less-likely to provoke a state of disbelief in citizens accustomed to modern technology.

There's an uglier side to this state of control: As detailed in **Victorian Mage**, the shift in favor of modern hypertechnology was won through slavery, conquest, genocide, mass indoctrination, and cultural extermination. Although some Technocrats admit as much, the true scope of those horrors, and of the Union's role in them, is about as welcome a topic in the Technocratic ranks as, say, discussions of the 1919 Elaine massacre would be in white rural Arkansas. The officially benevolent view of the Technocracy's arrangement with the Enlightened Anthropic Field Theory overlooks the titanic bloodshed involved in the current situation. Whether or not the Technocracy is secretly infested with Nephandic influence, the Union won a large share of influence over reality by killing a lot of people with opposing beliefs.

Yes, modern technology has made life better for many human beings, that improvement has benefitted the Technocracy, and the Technocracy has benefited humanity in turn. Still, few Technocrats want to recognize how much those benefits have cost the world at large, and none of them openly admit how precarious the current situation really is, or acknowledge that Enlightened Technocrats are also, by their own definition, Reality Deviants.

## A Disclaimer: Think Globally, Act Locally

Our Enlightened secret societies have remained hidden since the dawn of civilization itself. Only Enlightened minds can see what we've seen and be where we've been. However, we might not always have been so unified. Some academics in the NWO's Ivory Tower are often quick to point out that reality was not always a global phenomenon.

Long before the advent of the internet, airplanes, or the global economy, geography kept distant parts of the world separate from each other. The life of a villager on the West Coast of Africa was, in many ways, different from the life of a merchant in the heart of 15th century London. The collective belief of those villagers resulted in a reality different than the one that existed on the streets of London. Today, however, a shaman in the wilderness and a brain surgeon in Chelsea must contend with the same limits on the world around them. Primitive rituals that might have worked 500 years ago are now anachronisms. Take some solace in the fact that the world has changed. Welcome to the future.

Each major geographical area on the planet has at least one major Technocratic Construct assigned to it, most of them hidden in heavily secured locations on the Front Lines. Our marketing department in Construct Orange likes to call those places the *Regions of Reality*. Keep in mind that just as all Constructs are created equal, reality may have minor variations from one region to another. In the same way, while the policies represented in this handbook originated on Construct Orange, other Constructs you visit may have their own training and handbooks. Through the *Regional Management Initiative* (RMI), Management collectives reporting to different symposia also have the authority to articulate and implement their own policies, subject to the review and approval of their superiors. When traveling to another region, make sure you're aware of any minor changes. Your reality may vary.

What's that, you say? Does that sound unmutual? It certainly does. Someday, reality will be standardized around the planet. Someday, the loyalty you see in a refuge like Construct Orange will be seen on every street in the civilized world. Until that day, however, each and every Construct is an experiment in progress. We intend to make sure yours succeeds, and you're here to help us achieve that goal.

## A Mutual Alliance

At the height of the Ascension War, Nine Traditions of Deviant mages allied against our Technocratic Union, even though each "tradition" had a different vision for reality. Suffice it to say that those conspirators included many disparate crafts and a legion of fiercely individual solitary practitioners. They wanted to save the world but could never quite agree how to do it. In the 20th century, although unified by their common goal to destroy our Technocracy, their campaign failed. In the 21st century, our Union protects the world. Granted, representatives of the five Conventions may disagree over minor political issues, but we all work toward a set of common goals, as defined by our Mission Statement: *The Precepts of Damian*.

## DOM: The Doctrine of Mutuality

Fellow operative, you have learned through your training the importance of mutual behavior. The word “mutual” comes from the Latin root *mutuus*, which means “to exchange.” We, as the Union, provide you, our agent, with training, resources, allies, purpose, and protection in exchange for your loyalty, sacrifice, and service. Although the Union is formed from five Conventions with different scientific specialties, we act for a common purpose. Under the *Doctrine of Mutuality*, we stand united despite our differences. This Doctrine assures order, stability and respect between all operatives. We all share in our Union, and our Union shares mutual commitment with all of us.

Victory requires vigilance. On behalf of HR, be advised: You may encounter agents in the field whose loyalty has lapsed. We have a collective responsibility to document and report such behavior. We cannot tolerate unmutual behavior. Selfishness, disloyalty, rebellion — all of these behaviors are obvious signs of an unmutual mind. Minor transgressions should be reported to your team leader or manager; major infractions merit a message to higher authorities. Often, you can resolve these indiscretions by confronting an unmutual agent, but you must remember to follow through: Document these incidents and indiscretions. We’re all in this together, friend.

## Signs of Potentially Unmutual Activity

Forewarned is forearmed, so let’s take a moment to make sure you can see the signs of unmutual behavior. Our psychologists have been analyzing the five categories of conventional agents, and with the aid of a little data mining, we’ve noticed disturbing trends within each of the five Conventions. Ideally, we should all be on the same page, but we’ve learned that some agents have strayed, so to speak, from the playbook. If you see any of the following warning signs, contact your supervisor. As the old saying goes: *See something, say something*.

## Iteration X

Our colleagues in Iteration X are masters of machinery; their Convention acts with the efficiency of a machine. Their guns aimed with optimum accuracy, they fulfill their plans with all the precision of a Time-Motion Manager. So how do we know when an Iterator is unmutual? Perfection is their watchword. The first sign of unmutual behavior is a reduction in productivity.

Everyone makes mistakes, but when those lapses become a habit, that agent’s failures become a threat to us all. Is someone showing up late? Is accuracy decreasing, or vigilance waning? We applaud the loyalty of our Iterator comrades, and we recognize the recent shifts in the Convention’s old approach to situations. Just in case, however, keep an eye out for sloppy performance and imprecise activities. For want of a nail, a ship is lost. If one nail is out of place, let’s hammer it down.

## The NWO

The New World Order continually finds new ways to gather information. There’s no substitute for the footwork and bookwork done by Black Suits and other agents in the field, but new technological innovations provide access to more information about Reality Deviants and the Masses than we have ever had before. Every cell phone, every laptop camera, every post on social media all provide a rich tapestry of insight into the workings of the world.

An agent must accept that the Information Age is an open book, so ask yourself: *Are the agents on your team being open with you?* Do you suspect they’re hiding information? Are they not

sharing something that would benefit the collective? Have you found evidence of an agent communicating with someone who doesn't appear to be there? We've noticed a trend of secrecy through our Unions, so be advised: *We'll be watching and listening.*

## The Progenitors

Some of the most visionary scientists in the world have found safe harbor among the Progenitors. They heal us, they help us, and sometimes, they redefine the limits of our human abilities. Unlike the deranged Deviants in organizations like the Virtual Adepts or Etherites (or whatever they're calling themselves this week), these scientists and field operatives work with advanced technology that will one day be safe enough to distribute to the Masses. A few geniuses have particularly unusual ideas, and although we support their endeavors, we're also here to make sure their expectations are kept realistic.

You may have heard some ridiculous urban legends about bat-winged chihuahuas and other teratological terrors. No such beasts exist here within *our* Construct! That's because our Progenitors know the value of discretion. You should ask yourself, the next time a Progenitor uses science to do the impossible: *Are they being discreet?* What would a typical citizen think upon witnessing that creation? Does such technology constitute a vulgar, blatant display of power? You don't have to make that judgement on your own, but if a Progenitor seems reckless, notify your supervisor and management immediately.

## The Syndicate

Working within our Union offers many great opportunities for wealth. Although a handful of Symposiums distribute wealth among their citizens through a system of "equality disbursement" you may find questionable, we've found it's useful for meritorious agents to earn the right to their own personal wealth and (monitored) bank accounts. Syndicate agents, in particular, hone their skills by managing financial assets; especially when a Syndicate rep is appointed as a team leader, such skills provide excellent practice for resource management and profit / loss projections and calculations.

Some academics question the value of a system where some agents are wealthier than others, and you may have noticed unmutual agents using the system for their own personal gain. And so, you should ask yourself: *Is someone on your team flaunting personal wealth?* Are they putting something on an expense account that really should be tackled by personal initiative? Are they spending more than they should to impress the unenlightened? Reckless spending may be a sign of unmutual behavior, so remember: an audit can come at any time.

## The Void Engineers

We've heard some rather unmutal talk about the contributions made by our friends in the Void Engineer Convention. HR would like to remind you that wherever you are, there's a barrier protecting you from another dimension. When you're on the Front Lines of Earth, you are perpetually surrounded by the opportunity for a Reality Deviant to enter or leave your dimension. Your Void Engineer rep on the local Symposium would especially like to stress what a massive responsibility it is to watch against such incursions. This obligation is so great that it might distract a Void Engineer on your team from their responsibilities in what you see as "the Real World."

Ask yourself: Does your Engineer seem distracted? Does the threat of invasion from another dimension seem more pressing than the matter at hand, enough that the agent isn't performing

adequately on the Front Lines? And most importantly, are Sleepers noticing? The more they believe they're at risk, *the more they are actually at risk*. If the stress is too much for an agent on your team, you may need to notify management before that human resource hits its breaking point. A chain is only as strong as its weakest link, so look for gaps in the chain that need to be reforged.

## A Friendly Invitation

At some point, you're going to receive an invitation from Human Resources to talk about your current mission. In addition to a delicious beverage and a tasty snack, we'll also offer you a series of questions about the behavior of your colleagues. Don't worry: Everything you say will be kept confidential... unless, of course, we believe there's a strong and compelling reason to disclose the names of our anonymous informants. You can send an email to us at any time about suspected unmutual behavior — but even if you forget to ask *us*, we won't forget to ask *you*.

### Disputed Data: Magick, Procedures and Extraordinary Citizens

As far as the Technocracy is concerned, Union operatives do not use “magick” and are not “mages” of any kind. That perspective involves a fair amount of cognitive dissonance, and a few early **Mage** books suggest that Technocrats are simply mages deliberately fooling Sleepers into believing that what they do is not magick. Officially, however, the Union does not recognize — *ever* — that Enlightened technology is a variation of what other mages do. Syndicate agents might be able to get away with throwing the M-word around in a snide, ironic fashion (and may privately admit that money is essentially an act of magick with that will-working “k” attached at the end), but the Technocratic party line is that Enlightened Science differs radically from “magic.” Magic(k)al powers are Deviant; Enlightened Science is technology, and any good Technocrat draws a bold distinction between the two.

That said, the Union *does* recognize that their procedures hold the same reality-altering qualities that magick does, and that their science is subject to the Paradox Effect. Likewise, they realize that mages can be Socially Processed into discarding magick in favor of Enlightened Science, and that the most effective applications of that Science do require Enlightenment / Awakening. A heretical few even dare to look back at the accomplishments of their illustrious predecessors in the Order of Reason and admit that what those forebears were doing was essentially “magick,” too. Never will that acknowledgement, however, be made in a public or official capacity. Maintaining a distinction between Enlightened Science and Deviant “magick” is essential to the Technocratic mindset — which, in game terms, is one reason why Technocratic characters cannot outgrow their need for a technological focus (**Mage 20**, pp. 329 and 567).

Although the Technocracy recognizes Enlightenment as an essential component of their most advanced hypertech, their extraordinary citizens can be trained to employ and collaborate in the most basic applications of Union hypertech even when those citizens lack the greater levels of Enlightened Genius. This recognition, combined with the intense training (and often Social Processing) gives the Union a formidable edge in terms of personnel, for while wizards and witches proclaim that someday all people will Awaken to the arts, it's the Technocracy that puts the tools of



Enlightened Science into the hands of people who can employ them to some degree without becoming mages in their own right.

## Organizational Structure

In service to our goal — the most important goal imaginable — our Union follows an important rank-and-file organization. Within that chain of command, upper-echelon managers direct Technocratic resources (human and otherwise) in the most effective ways by employing their skills and experiences, while operatives with less skill and experience carry out those orders to the greater benefit of everyone involved. Given the importance of our task, it's vital that those orders be carried out swiftly and with as little complaint or argument as possible. Although you were probably used to a certain amount of rebellious latitude in your oldlife, we don't have the luxury to argue about little things when the Big Picture is at stake. Things are different in the Technocratic Union, and the individual freedoms so many people take for granted among the Masses are a liability among us here.

*Behave*, is what I'm saying here. Or else you won't like the consequences.

As you've already learned in your initial orientation, our Union features five Conventions, various subgroups, and certain ranks within each Convention. Before going forward with this welcome packet, we should present a brief review of the Technocratic structure. We're aware that the following is remedial data for those of you who've already been introduced to our Union and its ranks. Still, it's always helpful to go back over the basics, if only so that the pertinent data is close at hand and fresh in your mind.

### 6TP Rank Structure

T0	unEnlightened personnel
T1	extraordinary citizens and low-light Enlightened ops
T2	trained operatives
T3	supervisors and Managers
T4	upper Management and Symposium personnel
T5	Masters and oversight

## 6TP: The Six-Tier Pyramid

The best representation of our Technocratic ranks is a simple pyramid: A strong, broad base of staff and associates supporting a narrower range of extraordinary citizens, Enlightened operatives, and a gradual slide upward through managerial ranks until we reach the Inner Circle's pinnacle. Those at the top depend upon support from the lower ranks, and the lower ranks receive stability and purpose from the top of the pyramid. Every associate or operative has a place somewhere on that pyramid, and that pyramid serves everyone involved while maintaining constant vigilance over the world as a whole. From the base to the peak, our structure makes perfect geometric sense, which is as things should be.

In HR, we refer to *6TP*: six *Tiers* within that Pyramidal structure. This simplified six-tier scale makes it easier to form amalgams and manage agents throughout their career. Simply put, those six Tiers are as follows:

- **Tier Zero / T0: UnEnlightened Personnel:** The largest segment of our society comes from our base of unEnlightened personnel. These employees do not know the full extent of our activities, and we monitor them to make sure our secrecy is not compromised. UnEnlightened citizens outnumber any other tier of personnel, and most of them live day-to-day on the Front Lines of Earth. Tier Zero individuals typically do not have a “rank” in the Union. They are the baseline; they are Zero.
- **Tier One / T1: Low-Light Operations:** A slightly smaller populace has the clearance to work directly with Construct personnel. For the sake of classification, HR refers to them by two categories: *Extraordinary citizens* are not Enlightened but have proven their loyalty and skills during their time among initiated operatives. They receive special training and are sometimes integrated with cybernetic and / or biotech enhancements. *Enlightened initiates* include personnel who are Enlightened enough to perceive and analyze supernatural threats, but who lack the tools and procedures to fully oppose or affect significant threats in the field. Instead, these agents provide noncombat assistance, intelligence-gathering, crowd-control, and other essential support roles.
- **Tier Two / T2: Agents and Operatives:** Here’s where you come in. You’ve recently been promoted to a position where you can play your part in the Ascension Conflict with a team of other agents and operatives. Each time you’re assigned to one of these teams (in official terms, an *amalgam*), we’ll provide you with a stated goal — investigation, acquisition, infiltration, elimination, or another role — and at least one mission. Most of you will be working in the so-called “real world” — the realm that humanity knows as Earth. Down on the Front Lines, you’ll also come into contact and conflict with Reality Deviants, including anachronistic and Deviant mages who would destroy our one reality in favor of countless self-destructive alternatives. You know the drill. Each time you complete a mission, there’s a chance you might be assigned to another amalgam; after all, it’s the surest way to further your career.
- **Tier Three / T3: Supervisors and Managers:** Operatives who display impressive leadership, loyalty, and skill may become *supervisors*. In some rare cases, this means directly managing an amalgam in the field. In others, it might mean living day-to-day in a front shared by one or more teams. Most supervisors have proven their loyalty enough times to earn a more permanent position in a major Construct, and the highest-ranking supervisors become key Managers within a given construct, ship, or headquarters.
- **Tier Four / T4: Management and Symposiums:** Supervisors and Managers, in turn, report to *Management*: a collective that remains geographically and physically removed from your own daily activities in order to sustain and enhance their objectivity. In any large geographical area (such as a city, state, province, or nascent country), the highest-ranking Managers form a *Symposium* to oversee operations. On a day-to-day basis, you do not need to think about these leadership bodies. We trust in our leaders. Remember that each Symposium includes at least one representative from your Convention, and they are there to advocate for *you*.
- **Tier Five / T5: Masters and Extradimensional Oversight:** You do not currently have sufficient clearance to fully understand the eye at the top of the pyramid. Suffice it to say that it sees all. The eye is a metaphor. The pyramid is a metaphor. There is not a literal pyramid with a literal eye. This is all you currently need to know about T6 personnel.

Let’s explore those Tiers in detail before proceeding further.

## T0: Affiliates and Citizens

We couldn't function the way we do without our support staff of amazing *citizens and associates*. Millions of these people worldwide (and quite a few of them off-world as well) provide support and resources for Technocratic programs and technologies. The vast majority of these people have no idea what we're doing, of course, and it's best for everyone involved if they stay out of the loop, as it were. Like most people outside our Union, these citizens and associates just want to live their lives, get a paycheck, take care of their families, and treat themselves to something nice now and then. No one benefits if these people wake up to find angry werewolves in their living room, so it's up to us to make sure that support-staff citizens remain as insulated as possible from the often-messy business we pursue on the upper ranks of our organization.

### Allies, Assets, and Associates

At the fringes of our Union, we depend on countless *allies, assets, and associates*. Known sometimes as *sympathizers* (especially among old-school operatives) or, more recently, *affiliates*, these parties are not actual Technocrats and know little or nothing about our organization, its scope, or its purpose. It's a good idea to keep them in the dark as much as possible, because although they serve many valuable uses for our Union — especially when they command a significant degree of influence among the Masses — allies, assets, and associates tend to be undisciplined at best and occasionally counterproductive in the long term. In such cases, we need to cut them off as quickly and cleanly as possible.

In Union terminology, an *ally* is someone sympathetic to the Technocratic cause who has some ideas about who we are and what we do; an RD technoshaman agrees that the internet needs to be protected from corruption might become an ally. An *asset* provides useful resources but remains ignorant about what he's providing it for; a gangster with influence among the local teamsters is an asset; finally, an *associate* works for some group or organization that secretly works for us; a security guard at a Syndicate front company is an associate. All three advance the needs of our organization without actually being part of it.

This level represents an apparent contradiction to Technocratic protocol because many assets and allies are Reality Deviants of some kind: animated corpses, alien entities, rogue mages, that sort of thing. Technically, we are not supposed to deal with RDs in any friendly way; in a practical sense, though, it's sometimes in our best interests to have "a friend on the inside," as it were. That vampire might have valuable intel about our enemies; that alien could teach us about an environment we have not learned to master yet. Although certain parties are completely off-limits — *Nephandi mages are never to be engaged in any friendly fashion, EVER!* — a skilled and clever operative might make use of RD contacts if the asset in question aids the Technocratic cause. Those sorts of alliances are forbidden at lower ranks, of course, but once you prove yourself and advance further up the pyramid, you may find yourself involved with allies, assets and associates who provide helpful, if temporary, assistance to your missions and the greater good.

#### Disputed Data: Recruitment and Diversity

Despite its global scope, the Technocratic Union has Western European origins. Until recently, those origins favored white men (and occasional women) from upper-caste society. For centuries, secret societies within the Order of Reason recruited Enlightened minds harvested from the ranks of the rich and powerful, and

tended to promote their operatives accordingly. This propensity has proved... *counterproductive* at best. And so, the modern Technocracy stresses capability and dedication over superficial concerns like melanin, gender, and social rank. As Agent Blossom (of Construct Orange) says in her *Orange HR Handbook*: “When we recruit, we are looking for one factor above and beyond any other: the degree of your Enlightenment. Our methods don’t see the color of your skin or who you love or how you define your identity — we want you for your mind. That isn’t a recent development; it’s set us apart from more Traditional societies for a very long time.”

Enlightened people can often (though not always) sense when another person is likewise Enlightened. And so, there’s often a metaphorical “dance” to scope out a potential recruit’s abilities and talents. During the days of the Order of Reason, such exchanges often employed the trappings of secret societies: displaying “cries of distress,” making literary allusions in conversations, speaking in mystical innuendo, and so on. These days, Technocracy recruiters favor aura-reading technology, subtle mind-probes, and other tools of metaphysical discernment.

During the 20th century, the Union developed technological methods of scanning through large populations of humans for potential recruits, such as the Ivory Tower’s ability to sort through masses of students applying to college using standardized testing to find the brightest and most Enlightened candidates. In the 21st century, Progenitors now maintain genetic databases stocked by voluntary contributors searching for information about their ancestry and origins. Drug companies sometimes scan these databases for signs of medical conditions and complications; through similar methods, the Technocracy can seek out signs of potential Enlightenment, and then follow through with active recruitment. As this Enlightened tech has advanced, the results of recruitment have become increasingly diverse.

## Rank-and-File Support Staff

Within the unEnlightened Masses, we employ several million people (and certain animals) to handle most of the everyday business the Technocracy requires. Office staff, warehouse personnel, security guards for mundane locations, artisans and technicians, factory specialists, journalists, academics, law-enforcement personnel, etc. etc. etc.; these citizens provide the lowest but most important tier of our pyramid. Many operatives look down (so to speak) on these people, but that’s a mistake. The information scrolling across your VDAS feed comes from data gathered and sorted by these associates. If you call for backup (and you will), request gear (and you will), require cleanup (and you will), the rank-and-file support staff supplies those needs even if you never see them personally (and usually, you won’t).

Generally, we refer to these people as *citizens*. Some Technocrats prefer older terms like *proles*, *pawns* or *human resources*, but we discourage such terminology these days. *Citizen* implies a certain level of respect; a citizen belongs to something bigger and more civilized than a simple individual can be, and so calling these people “citizens” sets them aside from the mundane Masses. They might not be as individually valuable to our Union as you are, but our citizens play valuable parts in this Technocracy’s operations, so whether they realize their place in it or not, it’s up to us to remember their role in the Union we all share.

## Thinking Globally, Recruiting Locally

Since its inception as the Order of Reason, the Technocracy has favored one quality above all others: Enlightenment. Considerations of age, gender, identity, ethnicity, and so on are essentially irrelevant. The Union cares only for the brilliance of your Enlightened mind.

Despite such progressive thinking, a Construct that oversees a specific region of the globe (or more precisely, the Symposium leading it) may choose to recruit its members and affiliates largely or exclusively from the local populace. In these cases, most of the agents and assets for that Construct predominantly reflect the culture they're supervising. In theory, the Technocracy does not discriminate; in practice, certain Symposiums and Constructs *do*, especially along lines that reflect the culture and prejudices of the Masses nearby.

These insular Constructs still accept agents transferred from other parts of the globe. The transition might be rough for the agent in question, especially if that person belongs to a gender or culture that is, shall we say, unpopular in the region. Managers sometimes use such transfers deliberately, as punishment for an errant operative. Technically, that's unmutual. Good luck, though, if you're the agent on that particular shit list and trying to get someone to address your complaints.

Despite Technocratic standardization practices, each Construct has a great degree of latitude when it comes to personnel and other locale-specific elements. Thanks to the Regional Management Initiative, an individual Symposium may choose to define its parameters for identity within its Constructs as it chooses. This means a Symposium may set quotas (or eschew them), choosing agents all of one gender, an equal divide of genders, or setting a percentage of agents from a specific ethnic group; each of those Constructs might promote its operatives solely on metrics unrelated to gender or ethnicity. A merit-based metrics system is the most common mode of operations, but it's not the only one. As Management says, "your reality may vary."

To complicate matters: When a Construct is augmented by a caste of unEnlightened clones or other artificial personnel, that Construct's social parameters may be more extreme. An Iteration X Construct may have a cadre of exclusively male clones; a Progenitor research laboratory might decant clones with no discernable gender characteristics; an Ivory Tower research Construct might insist its cloned librarians have equal representation of binary gender. In each case, the ruling Symposium has made a deliberate choice.

**Storytellers Note:** From an in-game perspective, enforced or apparent personnel quotas and discrimination can upset players as well as characters. Although dramatic stories can be made around a discriminatory Construct and its leadership, this is "check in with your players" territory. Now, the Technocracy *is*, at heart, a dystopian authoritarian nightmare conspiracy state. Even so, Storytellers should be sure, before proceeding, that such potentially problematic themes won't kick off real-life problems around your table.

For more data regarding the protocols surrounding gender and ethnicity among the Union's ranks, see Unit 4, p. XX.

## T1: Low-Light Operatives

Fresh recruits, young prodigies, skilled citizens, and recently Enlightened operatives still in the training stage of their newlives fit into the T1 classification.

### Extraordinary Citizens

Certain people within our staff have been introduced into the hidden elements of our Technocratic Union. These tens of thousands of highly trained and motivated *extraordinary citizens* help us handle the endless tasks associated with a global organization that operates on several dimensions at once. Without these people, we could not do the things we do. While it's helpful to keep up the appearance that we have countless thousands of Enlightened operatives working our factories and labs, the truth is the people like you are far too rare and precious for support-work roles. Even at the lowest ranks, we need Enlightened operatives to focus on urgent and specialized tasks. Extraordinary citizens fill that gap between the mundane Masses and Enlightened personnel.

Unlike rank-and-file employees, extraordinary citizens literally believe in what we do. Generally, we promote such people from within the ranks of normal employees when a given individual shows special promise, dedication, and aptitude. Once provided special perks and training, these citizens can handle a bit of the heavier lifting that comes with employment within our Union; where the typical receptionist comes to work, works mundane desk duties, and goes home safe at the end of her shift, an extraordinary receptionist deals with confidential correspondence, has special security clearances, and probably employs a few bits of basic hypertechnology. Naturally, we keep a close eye on our extraordinary citizens. Those who continue to display talent — perhaps even the stirrings of Enlightenment — receive greater access, training, clearance, and privileges. Those who prove disappointing... well, our Union has use for them, too, but it's best not to talk too much about that.

While Enlightened operatives such as yourself enjoy a higher status and greater perks within our Union, extraordinary citizens are the foundation on which we rest. In addition to the tasks they perform, these people maintain, enhance and perpetrate our vision for reality — a vision where technology enhances human progress and superstitionism gets banished back to the Dark Ages where they belong, forever.

Within our ranks, each Technocratic Convention has its own methods for enlisting highly intelligent and motivated people as extraordinary citizens. *Everyone* employs technicians and office-support staffers, of course, with other enlistees coming from fields which support the goals of the Convention in question. Iteration X favors inventors, mathematical savants, programmers, engineers, security guards, and other people with that Convention's signature taste for precision and perfection. The NWO recruits law-enforcement officers, media professionals, spies, office personnel, political consultants, bloggers, pundits, and other specialists in information and control. The Progenitors split their support staff between field work, offices, and laboratory facilities, while the syndicate promotes executives, PR and HR specialists, fashion consultants, personal assistants, bodyguards and other intimate associates. The Void Engineers man their vessels, labs, and outposts with hundreds of extraordinary citizens who have learned that "science fiction" pales in comparison to the realities we understand. Each Convention tests its people often for aptitude and loyalty, with generous rewards for both. Thanks to the efforts of these extraordinary citizens, our Union commands dozens of Constructs, thousands of

businesses, and millions of offices, labs, and bases around the world and outside its most obvious borders.

### Prodigies: Born This Way

According to most sources, Technocracy agents begin outside the Union and then abandon their old life for a new identity within their group. Some Technocrats, however, are born and raised within the Union; they don't have an old life because the Technocracy is all they've ever known. You can find out more about those *prodigies* in Unit 4, p.xx.

## Low-Light Initiated Operatives

The few, the proud, the Enlightened — that's us — people who understand our true capabilities on a cellular level and grasp the deeper implications of what we can truly do. Where unEnlightened citizens provide a foundation for our Union, we are the stone from which it's made. That awareness makes us valuable in ways other people could never be. Enlightenment, though, comes with big responsibilities. The future of our world depends on what we do.

We tend to call our recently Enlightened agents *initiated operatives* because they've been initiated into a greater understanding of our task. The word *initiate* is a relic from the days of the Order of Reason. Although it's employed infrequently as a word that refers to everyone of this rank, each Convention has its own designation for this type of agent. Recently, supervisors have begun using the term *low lighter* to refer to newly initiated operatives. The "initiated" personnel might be working on a team of agents who share similar degrees of training, or they may be assigned to work with higher-ranking agents.

Oh, and that upper-case Enlightened "E"? That's to distinguish you from people who think they understand how the world works but really don't. Trust me, there's a huge difference between some kid who takes a yoga class and a Technocratic operative who comprehends our true place in the cosmos. Even at the lowest ranks in our Technocracy, you are precious. You are valuable. You are one of us.

Each Convention tends to work differently with freshly initiated Enlightened operatives:

### Iteration X

The "Clockwork Convention" programs its *ciphers* to do their grunt work. Often lacking full independence, these initiates are like hard drives waiting for the right program. Because Iteration X has a very collective ideology, ciphers who have been raised or instructed within this Convention's Constructs need to earn the right to define their own identity from the amalgam around them. As a cipher seeks upgrades and further Enlightenment, they eventually find an alternative: being the programmer who makes everyone else get with the program.

Although Iterators occasionally recruit new members from outside the Technocracy, many of the group's initiates have been raised with it their whole lives in one way or another. Even outside recruits, however, surrender their individual identity at the lower ranks. Ideally, Iterators try to get their people thinking of themselves as cogs in a larger machine. Although the idea of people as machines is beginning to fall out of favor even within the Clockwork Convention, there's a lot to be said for starting your people off at the same level and then incentivizing them to work upwards from there.

## The New World Order

NWO initiates begin intense training for their bodies and minds. After a year or two of training, these *Black Suit initiates* get sent out as support teams on missions in the field; those initiates work with extraordinary citizens and upper-ranked Black Suits in order to gain the skills and disciplines they need. The best of these Black Suits become full-time field agents — the kind who inspire legends about “the Men in Black.” Most remain in the offices or labs, dressed in identical black suits regardless of gender unless they’re training in the gym or getting a few hours of much-needed sleep.

In the New World Order, the Black Suit rank constitutes an especially rigorous boot camp for agents who will go on to greater things. Newly initiated agents handle the tedious parts of investigations, dedicating their time to “bookwork and footwork” until they graduate to supervised support roles in the field. Agents who display an aptitude for field work often stay at the Black Suit rank but receive increasingly higher degrees of training, responsibilities, and rewards. Those who demonstrate especially fine people skills may be trained as secret agents or media operatives instead, granted more latitude in individual fashion and appearance while being “introduced back into the wild” under new personas and newlife names.

This “black suit protocol” began at the end of the Victorian age, as a way of getting our agents to stop thinking of themselves as individuals and identity themselves as a collective. Until a few years ago, all freshly initiated Black Suits had their heads shaved; Iteration X ciphers still do. Short haircuts, though, remain mandatory until an agent graduates from Black Suit status to the *Operative*, *Reporter* or *Grey Suit* rank. By the time a NWO agent earns the right to a distinct hairstyle and personalized grooming, that agent has acquired formidable mental disciplines, impressive physical combat skills, and the sort of social acumen that a Hollywood agent would kill to receive. Easily underestimating “faceless” people is one of the points of the Black Suit protocol. Anyone who understands our Union, though, knows better than to ever, *ever* underestimate a person in a black suit. You never know entirely whom you’re dealing, or what that person is capable of doing — and that, fellow operatives, is *also* part of the point.

## The Progenitors

Where Iterators and the NWO prize uniformity, Progenitors prize individuality. Sure, they make clones, but initiated members of this Convention must show personal initiative and achievements. To that end, they start their initiates out as *research assistants*, *street ops*, and *recruiters*, tailoring the position to that initiate’s abilities but still forcing them to confront their limitations and either rise above them, wash out, or die.

Of all Conventions, the Progenitors are the group most focused on academic pursuits and laboratory work. The pressures their initiates face are more often mental than physical. This is a group, however, that believes accelerated evolution is the key to the future, and so assigns their beginners to street-level positions among gangs, First Responder teams, or both. Most of these low-light agents eventually obtain the kind of formal education and laboratory facilities enjoyed by higher-ranking students; first, however, they must prove themselves on the Front Lines, where even the geekiest lab rat must get her hands dirty.

## The Syndicate

The Money Men and Women sign paychecks for capital-A *Associates*; the most profitable Associates are colloquially referred to as “*Magic Men*,” whatever gender they might be. Yeah,



the Syndicate is like that, but we love them anyway because *no one* is better at bringing in funds and securing the best deals. As you can imagine, running the Technocracy is an expensive proposition, so this Convention is especially good at gathering and managing the financial resources we need to keep the lights on and the monsters away.

Like the Progenitors, the Syndicate prizes individualism; in many ways, they're polar opposites of the collective-minded Order and Iterators. Where Iteration X seeks efficient cogs, the Syndicate demands ambition, charisma, and personal excellence. If you step into the high-end polished shoes of Syndicate initiation, you'd best be prepared to prove yourself every day, in every task, with every word you say — not by conforming to a uniform ideal but by proving you've got what it takes to make things happen.

In the other Conventions, new initiates leave their oldlives behind. You probably did it when you arrived, and so you know what I'm referring to: That split between the person you were before joining our Technocracy, and the operative you are among us now. Sometimes, though, the Syndicate lets its initiatives keep their oldlives and all the connections the old identity possessed. Connections, after all, are everything in business, and especially since so many Syndicate operatives come from wealthy families, crime families, or wealthy crime families, those connections are useful to the Syndicate as well as to its Associates. That's not true all the time, though; many Syndicate agents begin at the bottom of life's applecart but get recognized for the potential to be something great if presented with the right opportunities. Those initiates go through the usual oldlife/newlife process, stepping out as freshly minted Associates hungry for a chance to prove their worth. You don't want to get in the way of *those* Syndicate Associates, believe me! A shark has more compassion than a Magic Man with a brand-new life and the chance to make his bones at your expense.

## The Void Engineers

This Convention is out of this world. Literally. Even its initiates leave the world as they knew it behind during the first part of their orientation. In space, there is no "oldlife," and while plenty of VEs stay behind and explore the secret regions of this world, the idea of leaving who you used to be in order to become who you are now is an essential part of the Void Engineer experience.

Void Engineer *Students*, *Technicians*, and Marines need to be ready for nearly any kind of assignment — sometimes, they do fieldwork in other dimensions. Misinformed agents from other Conventions think of these initiates as a bunch of functionaries in jumpsuits, living somewhere off in space, but VE students still have a *lot* of work to do as part of their internships in Earthbound space. Anywhere you go on Earth, there's a barrier separating this world from other dimensions and the Pan-Dimensional Entities that come with them. Some of those students join the Border Corps Division straight-off as the Marines taking the fight to extradimensional intruders, and so the VE initiation/orientation process resembles the basic training process required of Armed Forces recruits among the Masses. Striking a balance between the collective identities of the Iterators and NWO, and the individualism preferred among the Progenitors and Syndicate, new VE operatives adopt new identities and uniform dress and behavior while retaining a sense of themselves as individuals within a group-focused effort — a lifetime campaign to save the Earth from hostile forces on all sides of existence.

## Cross-Training Between Conventions

Each Convention has its own methods for recruiting and training initiates. To broaden an operative's skillset, however, most Constructs allow their operatives to cross-train with members

of other groups. More often than not, cross-trained agents serve in mixed-Convention groups, go on missions together, and sometimes even share living quarters. Decades ago, such “fraternization” was unusual, even suspicious; in the current era, though, we’ve found that it creates a sense of flexibility, cooperation and unity that the old “stick with your own kind” mode could not match. And so, as you probably know from your own experience, cross-training and mixed-Convention amalgams are the rule, not the exception, within the Union we all share.

We’ll talk more about amalgams below. For now, just keep in mind that you’ll be working with each other in all kinds of situations, so remember: Our Union and its mission depend on cooperation between everyone involved, so play nice with one another!

## T2: Agents and Operatives

The most skilled and versatile Technocrats work in the middle of the pyramid as *agents* and *operatives*; the two terms are more-or-less interchangeable. Formally, each Convention has its own terminology for describing specialists with various methods and Methodologies; for simplicity’s sake, though, most Technocrats at this level are known simply as agents or operatives, and they fill a wide range of roles — soldiers, scientists, diplomats, healers, and visionaries, just to name a few.

When possible, an operative’s initial training begins in Horizon Constructs and other off-world headquarters. These days, however, the vast majority of our agents live and die among the Masses in Earth’s primary and material dimension. We call this world “the Front Lines” because that’s what it *is*. In your oldlife, you may have remained unaware of the paranormal infestation of the so-called “everyday world.” As initiated Technocratic operatives, you know better now. This world is a battlefield in which Reality Deviants strive to pervert Reality into a thousand disparate visions. Whether you hunt them in the streets, research them in a laboratory, create weapons in a factory, or counter this pervasive RD influence from a classroom or media center, the “Front Lines” are all around you — always.

## Newlife Fronts and Amended Society

In time, if you desire to do so, you can earn the right to take your newlife out into the Masses again, this time with a job that won’t lay you off on a whim, a decent paycheck, excellent health benefits, and rent-free living space. Especially these days, the ability to start over again with a stable home, income, and medical care provides a massive incentive for new recruits. Chances are good that you joined us to gain those things, and I promise you this: If you take care of the Technocracy, the Technocracy takes care of you.

A newlife “front” depends a lot on your station and aptitudes. Most Syndicate operatives work in some capacity of the business world, while many VE Neutralization Specialists live incognito among the Masses, their gear and weapons hidden until a cross-dimensional incursion occurs. Lower-ranking agents share housing — a situation common among the highest levels of Iteration X and non-covert operatives of the NWO. Upper-tier operatives from the Progenitors, Syndicate, and media and spy divisions of the NWO, however, can earn their own apartments, homes, or even (for operatives whose fame and wealth are important aspects of their jobs) mansions, penthouses, and estates. All those properties are strictly monitored, of course, and filled with Technocratic employees and assets. Still, if you want a fresh start with a new identity and the chance to live well in an uncertain era, the opportunity to get those things is close at hand!

Again, this level of freedom is a privilege, not a right. Agents who do well for the Union can do very well for themselves, too — and agents who don't appreciate the Union's gifts can lose those gifts, sometimes permanently. *Amended society* is what they call the punishment for ingratitude, so if you know what's good for you... well, you can guess the rest.

### T3: Supervisors and Construct Managers

Everyone needs to report to someone, and so each amalgam reports to at least one upper-level operative: the *supervisor*. That supervisor provides the team with a mission, oversees their requisitions for equipment, and evaluates their degree of success. In some Constructs, a separate supervisor (possibly from a different Convention) might oversee one or more of those tasks. An agent needs to do more than prove himself in the field before he can be promoted to the rank of supervisor. Any Construct can devolve into political struggles, and sometimes, an ambitious agent needs to make sure he's backed the right horse.

Within a mixed-Convention Construct, each Convention has its own role to play. And so, different supervisors often offer different types of missions. Iteration X might oversee a shockwave attack on hidden clutch of Reality Deviants; a Void Engineer might need the team to step across the Gauntlet to investigate extradimensional activity; an NWO supervisor may need a team to investigate, abduct, or even process a potential recruit, and so on.

At the height of the Ascension Conflict, supervisors managed their teams from the Horizon, high in orbit above the earthly battlefield. In recent years, that situation has changed. These days, a more localized, earthbound approach is preferable to the distant monitoring of previous decades. Even so, supervisors must be kept safe from rampaging monsters and RD attacks. Most of them, then, work in offices and laboratories filled with hypertechnology appliances and luxurious furnishings, communicating through telepresence with their agents in the field. Ideally, you should aspire to similar rewards for your service to our Technocracy.

### The Construct Manager

In each Construct or VE vessel, there's at least one supervisor who has worked her way up the ladder, as it were. This supervisor is often (though not universally) accorded the rank of Manager although she still operates independently of the T4 Management collective. This Manager essentially (perhaps literally) functions as the captain of the ship — the ultimate authority within that Construct or vessel. Although this Manager retains a degree of contact with her subordinate operatives, a supervisor of this rank deserves privacy and safety while she ponders the complex matters her position demands.

### T4 and T5: Symposiums and Management

Nearing the top of the pyramid, we find the Managers... or, more accurately, *we* don't find Managers — Managers find *us*. Most of what Management does is above our security clearance level, so I'll just say that when you need to know more about the peak of the pyramid, your Managers will let you know.

### Actions Have Consequences

You are a loyal and trustworthy citizen, even when you notice some of your colleagues stray from mutual behavior. Everyone has their own personal reasons for conforming to the rules, and everyone knows what happens when they don't. We encourage you to now say the following words out loud: "*Actions. Have. Consequences.*"

Although we're all one big happy family here, we're like an American Thanksgiving dinner: Dad still sits at the head of the table, and someone's got to sit at the kids' table. Ideally, everyone knows their place at those tables. For the times when an unruly "kid" needs to be reminded about how the family works, it may be necessary to move that person further away from the head of the table — or, if no other measure works, to send that person away from the table permanently. Certain disruptions and misunderstandings are to be expected; no family is perfect, after all. If those disruptions threaten the security of the family and the table, however, then a wise parent is a stern parent.

## SDS: The Six Degrees of Separation

Following this eminently logical approach, loyalty to and within our Union is tracked by a system called the *Six Degrees of Separation* (SDS): Degree 1 agents have attained perfect loyalty, or at least, as perfect as perfect can be. Agents who are demoted to "Degree 7" are no longer be with us, because there *is* no Degree 7. You'll no doubt see their impending exit before it occurs, and once they have been "termed," you thankfully never have to think of them again.

Because no organization can remain truly static, especially not in tumultuous times such as ours, we're constantly redefining the districts and boundaries of our upper management. No doubt you've heard some recent chatter about the *Regional Management Initiative* (RMI). If you haven't, let's summarize: Each large geographic area is overseen by a Symposium, a board of directors where each of the five Conventions are represented. With the aid of expert advice from HR, each Symposium has the clearance to provide certain degrees of flexibility with regards to the guidelines employed when internal promotions and demotions are handled within a given Symposium. We're all working towards a common vision for reality, but management is empowered to choose their own methods, which may vary from one region to the next.

The most common system is very simple: You and your team receive a mission. If you succeed, there's a chance of promotion. If you fail, expect a demotion. Most teams (or *amalgams*) start out at a default of Degree 3. If you fail on your first mission, expect your questionable behavior to demote you to Degree 4. You've received your first strike, and if you get two more strikes, you'll receive your final warning with Degree 6. Each time you fail, another demotion awaits.

Of course, you don't need to worry too deeply about such things because you're planning for *success*. You've got a positive attitude, and it shows. If you *didn't* have a positive attitude, that would be unmutual, but you and HR now have a mutual understanding. If you succeed, your chances of promotion increase. The top three degrees — 1, 2, and 3 — provide evidence of your loyalty and efficacy, and such promotions have commensurate privileges.

Because of some admittedly archaic views in the Ivory Tower, the first three degrees are sometimes known as the *Inner Circle*; the next three degrees are sometimes called the *Outer Circle*. As you move towards Degree 1, you "move inward"; as you lapse towards Degree 6, you "move outward." Sometimes, that last colloquialism is quite literal: Degree 6 agents may find themselves reassigned to the most distant or least desirable locales in the Union.

## Inward and Outward

**Degree 1** verifies your *total loyalty*. It's our highest honor for agents and an indicator of trust. The difficulty for all your attempts to requisition equipment is reduced, and your surveillance is minimal. You often have a choice of assignments for your next mission. Only a limited number

of amalgams can attain Degree 1, so keep in mind that we may compare your performance statistics against others.

**Degree 2** indicates your *assured loyalty*. You've consistently succeeded on your missions, or perhaps you've resolved your first mission in a spectacular manner. Your financial compensation is substantial, and you'll have the option of maintaining your own residence on the Front Lines.

**Degree 3** is the name of the training process for our new recruits; it's also the default level of loyalty. We call it that for a reason: after completing your training and answering all our questions, you'll feel like you've received the *third degree*! This is, of course, a popular joke within our ranks. Never let it be said that Technocratic operatives have no sense of humor. (No, really — *never* let that be said. And yes, that *is* a joke. Sort of.)

**Degree 4** agents have demonstrated *questionable loyalty*. You've either failed in your first mission, or you've lapsed from success and mutual behavior. You're not going to slip to the fourth degree just because of one unmutual act or thought. When you've got an objective to fulfill on a mission and you obviously fail at it, you'll see that demotion before it happens.

**Degree 5** agents are on the "red list" because their loyalty is doubtful. Every Construct has tough jobs that need to get done, and some are tougher than others. In addition to various chores you must undertake in your formerly free time, we may offer you a mission with a higher level of difficulty, so you can show us how much you want to settle your account.

**Degree 6** agents are disloyal and unmutual. You (and possibly your amalgam) may be reassigned to a particularly challenging environment. When you reach your new assignment, you may find that the rules have changed, your privileges have been reduced, or your identity has been altered. Don't let that get you down, though. Think of it as a motivation to work harder.

**Degree 7** is also known as *Degree Absolute*. Under the metaphor mentioned earlier, this involves being sent away from the table. The penalty, though, is much stiffer than a night without dinner or the attendant whipping some of you might recall from your younger days. If Degree 6 represents profound disappointment, Degree 7 represents terminal incorrigibility, and is addressed with appropriate severity.

As we mentioned earlier, mistakes are inevitable. Slip-ups occur and can be forgiven. Our Union holds a significant investment in each one of our operatives, and so we are neither capricious nor careless with our Degrees. Because that investment must be protected, though, our Union must remain strict. In a world filled with, and surrounded by, Extinction Level Events in not-quite-human form, strict vigilance is what keeps our family — and *every* human family — alive.

#### Disputed Data: Degree Absolute

Waste is not an efficient use of resources. Especially when those resources involve tremendous investments of money, time, and training, it's wasteful to turn Enlightened operatives into puree for the smallest errors. According to rumor, the Technocratic Union pulps its agents after a handful of infractions, often turning them into spare parts, wiping their minds, feeding them to lab-born critters, or simply sending them into the line of fire to get rid of them. Early **Mage** books maintained this impression, and the threat of literal termination remains a major tactic when keeping Technocrats in line.

However, although Degree Absolute *is* an actual solution to troublesome operatives, it's not something the Technocracy as a whole employs except in the most extreme cases. Individual managers and Symposiums might maintain an especially bloodthirsty protocol, especially with regards to unEnlightened personnel. When it comes to punishing Enlightened operatives, however — particularly operatives with impressive skills and resources — careless treatment and disposal is a waste of resources that even the Union cannot generally afford.

In place of outright termination, upper-level Technocrats prefer methods that keep the errant agent productive while limiting that agent's ability to damage the Union further. **The Book of Secrets** details those methods from a game perspective (pp. 223-230), and so when (not “if” — *when*) Technocracy characters screw up in your game, those increasingly draconian punishments reflect the true forms of Technocratic justice — a justice more concerned with efficient use of resources than with the human cost of discipline.

## TDS: The Damian Scale

When preparing for your next mission, you should know that your supervisor will occasionally be very specific about which activities in the field may result in demerits and/or demotion. You should be grateful for these warnings, because a supervisor is under no obligation to disclose the metrics they employ for evaluating your behavior. Nonetheless, one commonly used metric is worth mentioning at this stage. Employed since the days of Victorian England, it measures your use of Enlightened Science, and we call it the *Damian Scale* (TDS).

As we've articulated quite clearly earlier in this document, unEnlightened citizens remain safest when they are kept away from open manifestations of what Reality Deviants call “magic(k)” — that is, the careless reality fluctuations performed by so-called “mages.” We don't want the Masses to question the nature of reality; that way quite literally leads to madness. Instead, we want to the Masses to remain secure in the vision of stability for which we assert control. Pandimensional whims must be contained, as must the people (and other less-human creatures) who exert them at the cost of innocent mortal lives.

Agents in our Technocracy don't need “magick,” of course. We employ Enlightened technological procedures, principles and devices. Untrained citizens can't make that tech work, but *you* can. As you'd expect, advanced technology provides powerful tools, but it can be indiscreet when used carelessly: When an innocent citizen sees something that looks like a science fiction movie gone berserk, he starts to question reality in ways that can create complications for everyone involved. We call these advanced methods “blatant procedures”; some agents colloquially refer to them as “vulgar.”

If you use vulgar or blatant procedures repeatedly, *especially* in front of unenlightened citizens, this adversely affects your performance rating. Managers track the number of blatant procedures, weigh their impact on localized reality, factor in the number of witnesses, and reach a performance rating between 1 and 10. For now, you don't need to worry about the exact algorithm employed — just keep those numbers low. Be discreet. Act unseen. When necessary, remove evidence of paranormal or allegedly supernatural phenomena. If you can't control the localized results of your procedures, your manager will certainly note your lapses in performance. For more details, contact your team leader, supervisor, or management.

## [CHART]

### TDS Ratings

- 1 Vanishing point
- 2 Undetectable
- 3 Subtle
- 4 Clever
- 5 Acceptable threshold
- 6 Careless
- 7 Reckless
- 8 Dangerous
- 9 Deviant
- 10 Terminal Deviance

## [END CHART]

### NEI: Neglect, Error, Intent

Like many Union organizations, we employ *the NEI system* to correct unwanted behavior. Periodic unscheduled Evaluation Reviews analyze each operative's behavior and interactions, paying special attention to the inevitable infractions that result when human imperfections meet the purity of our ideals.

This simple three-step system shows the three most common consequences of unmutual actions:

- If you were careless enough to unintentionally *neglect* the rules, perhaps because you were unaware or uninformed, your punishment is a corrective measure, which prevents you from relapsing in future.
- If you have chosen poorly and made an *error*, you have shown you are not worthy of trust. You will receive demerits or an immediate demotion.
- If you willingly break Union protocol with *deliberate* disobedience or destruction of collective property, we reserve the right to do more than demote you. Correction is harsh and possibly terminal. Social Conditioning may be required. You have been warned.

We have been informed that some agents refer to the HR representatives who perform these Evaluation Reviews as "*NEI-sayers*." That joke is not recognized as humorous. You are now being informed that such terminology is unmutual, and evidence of this transgression cannot be treated as neglect. Demerits will result in temporary reassignment to maintenance chores for the betterment of the Construct.

### Infractions and Reprimand

As previously mentioned, a certain amount and degree of infractions are inevitable. And so, punishment is inevitable, too. Despite rumors to the contrary, we don't use errant operatives for spare parts every time someone makes a mistake. That would be silly. And wasteful. We only do that to operatives who don't learn from their mistakes.

I'm kidding. Sort of.

Obviously, good service outweighs certain errors. Each operative is an investment for our Union, and operatives who make that investment worthwhile are considered more valuable to the Technocracy than operatives who do not. It's simple mathematics, and we all want to keep our numbers high. Compliance adds to your value as an agent.

Keep in mind that when you *do* receive a punishment (and you will), we reserve the right to reverse or cancel it if you respond with mutual, meritorious, or conspicuously gallant service.

- **Reprimand:** When you cross a line, we'll let you know. You may be invited to a private session where one of your supervisors directly and emphatically tells you the nature of your transgression. Further lapses in judgment are then no longer mere *neglect* — they are then *errors*. Note that referring to these sessions colloquially to other agents using terms like, “taking the lashes,” “getting chewed out,” “getting called on the carpet,” and so forth is unmutual, and may be redressed with further reprimands.
- **Report:** When an official complaint is filed against you, that's going in your permanent file. Other amalgams or supervisors may have access to this information before working with you. In time, the possibility of deleting this file may be offered as a reward for meritorious or hazardous service.
- **Restriction:** When you show that you cannot be trusted with loyalty, we can no longer trust you with privileges. A restriction may be a temporary alternative to a full demotion. Keep in mind that some Constructs do not offer as many freedoms as others; such privileges must be earned, not provided as a default.
- **Surveillance:** We're watching you. If you act in suspicious or unmutual ways, we need to increase your surveillance. On Construct Brown, for example, the default 24/7 surveillance is augmented with additional methods of surveillance, such as psychic scans, biometric data mining, full “sensoround” recording, and/or body cams. Construct Orange, by contrast, prefers to reward loyalty with privacy instead.

Note: The previous paragraph should not be taken as tantamount to a “Terms of Service” agreement, nor are we obligated to disclose the frequency or intensity of your surveillance.

- **Forfeiture:** Within a typical Construct, property is mutual. When you behave unmutually, you can no longer enjoy that mutual property. We reserve the right to enforce loyalty by restricting access to goods and services on the Construct. If you've been authorized for personal wealth on the Front Lines, for example, we can make that a privilege instead of a right: your bank account, vehicle, or home access may be temporarily remanded to other operatives within the Union.
- **Demotion:** For further elaboration on this consequence, please reference our earlier materials regarding the “Six Degrees of Separation.” Failure to do so may result in reprimand.
- **Amended Society:** When you demonstrate suspicious or unmutual behavior, we reserve the right to amend your personal life or increase your social monitoring on the Front Lines. People you know and places you go may become data points we use to evaluate you. Associates with harmful ideas can be removed or amended within your personal life.



- **Reassignment:** As we mentioned earlier, success can result in reassignment to better missions and/or quarters; failing to succeed in your assignments can lead to more adverse assignments and surroundings for you and your amalgam.
- **Reprogramming:** The New World Order has elaborate methods of programming, deprogramming, or reprogramming agents. Social Conditioning can upgrade your identity, your memories, or your reactions to specific phenomena.
- **Duplication:** You may have heard that Construct Brown has the authority to erase unmutual agents and replace them with conditioned clones. We would like to assure you that this punishment is not enacted in most Constructs, especially not exemplary locales like Construct Orange. Any clones you may encounter are duplicates of existing agents, not replacements.
- **Degree Absolute:** You have not seen any evidence of The Seventh Degree, otherwise known as Degree Absolute. Any agents that are not currently in your Construct have been reassigned elsewhere. Do not trouble yourself by discussing the current status of these agents. Doubt is unmutual. Questions are a burden. And actions have consequences.

## There's No "I" in Team: Your Amalgam

No agent should ever need to work alone. Even scouts and deep-cover operatives receive remote backup from their support team. When you first enter training, you're assigned to a crèche of trainees all working and learning together. During that training period, you are assigned to a block of habitation cubes where you all share resources as neighbors. Training can vary widely, of course, depending on the Construct and Convention involved: day-to-day work among Iteration X clones is nothing like life on the bold frontier here on Construct Orange! Eventually, though, you'll most likely find yourself back on the Front Lines, now with a new understanding of just how weird and perilous the "real world" really is. And so, we make certain that our operatives — especially the new ones who are still learning their role in this deeper state of existence — never have to face those dangers alone.

Amalgams come in many configurations, but share several criteria. First, your superiors must designate a supervisor to oversee the briefing and resource allocation for the team. Before you leave the Construct on your first mission, you are assigned one to oversee your progress. Your amalgam may decide who's in charge in the field, but ultimately, you need to report back to your team's supervisor. That individual may not be the one who's responsible for bringing your team together, but they're your point of contact until the mission is complete and your debriefing has occurred.

Once your supervisor is assigned, they must work with your Construct's human resources team to select agents. Possible configurations include:

### The Cross-Conventional Amalgam

The most common configuration involves a team in which each of the five Conventions is represented by at least one agent. Each Convention has its own specialty, so supervisors find this sort of structure tends to function best in the field. Debriefing is also easier because each agent can report directly to their local Construct representative in addition to their supervisor's debriefing.

Some "cc-amalgams" require agents of at least a minimal rank in the Union; that's one of the reasons why we have a universal designation of five ranks. (You may have heard chatter about

Technocrats above Rank 5; you need not concern yourself with these rumors.) The most common configuration for a cc-amalgam is one in which all agents are at least Rank 3. As one would expect, when a supervisor sends a communiqué to all the agents on your current team, you are “cc’d” on the message.

## The Conventional Amalgam

Sometimes, one of the Conventions has a vested interest in an opportunity or crisis related to its specialty. A Void Engineer amalgam, for example, may be assigned to explore a location in the Deep Universe, or to defend an extradimensional location. An Iteration X amalgam could include a team of cyborgs and soldiers trained to work closely together against a paranormal threat. It’s only natural for you to feel a sense of loyalty to your first cross-Conventional amalgam, but your local Convention representative may require you to spend some time away from your regular assignment crucial to the division that recruited, trained, and provisioned you.

## The Low-Light Amalgam

Rank 1 and Rank 2 agents sometimes lack the training to join a cross-Conventional amalgam. They may have been held back because of errors during the training period, or perhaps they aren’t Enlightened enough to fully understand the technology we use. We collectively refer to these individuals as *low-light* agents; while they are valued citizens, standardized testing reveals that their diminished levels of Enlightenment exclude them from higher-security tasks. Enlightened Rank 2 agents often end up working with a pool of unEnlightened sympathizers, such as clones, lab assistants, or Black Suit clone operatives. You may be asked to oversee or coordinate with one of these teams in the field.

Within your Construct, we also have low-light citizens who carry out day-to-day operations within the Union. While most of these positions are filled by unEnlightened or extraordinary citizens, we have some fronts and Constructs where anomalous, paranormal, or just plain *weird* activity nearby requires the intellect and insight of low-light agents. Nonetheless, we all need to do our part, so those agents may be tasked with clerical work, laboratory maintenance, routine surveillance, financial management, janitorial duties, and so on. These teams are also known by another designation:

## The Internal Amalgam

Finally, we should mention the hard-working teams that find a rewarding, fulfilling career by living and working full-time within the Construct. This category of collective includes citizens who carry out maintenance, secretarial, and graduate student studies within our collective home. Higher-ranking agents may form an internal amalgam because of an advanced research program, the maintenance of targeted groups or locations, or supervisory duties. When evaluating one of these teams, you may want to review the guidelines for the *Hierarchy of Assets and Resources* (a.k.a. the HOAR report), which assesses the relative value of parties within the Union.

## The Shockwave Amalgam

Lest we forget their service and sacrifice, let’s also hear it for the amalgams who train for outright war on the Front Lines. Only the bravest, best and brightest of our soldiers need apply. These teams tend to be dominated by Iteration X shock troops and Void Engineer marines, but if you know how to point and shoot a gun — and we *know* you do! — then your citizenship no doubt compels you to service. Who’s going to make sure your team follows the rules? Who’s

going to make sure everyone's motivated and loyal? That's you! The chances of survival are admittedly low, but the chances for glory and promotion are at an all-time high!

Please note that the team to which you're assigned may only be temporary. You might work together for one mission, a limited number of missions, or an infrequent sequence of missions. It's not uncommon for an agent to be reassigned after a briefing, especially if their actions have affected their Degree of Separation. Keep your numbers up on the Damian Scale, and you may find yourself up for promotion. You may even be able to choose your next assignment.

## RSP: Requisitions and Resources

If and when you earn the ability to begin a new life outside your assigned Construct, you have opportunities to prepare for your next mission. Our marketing department calls this opportunity the *Req Spec Phase (RSP)*: The opportunity to request gear and other resources beyond those you are normally assigned by your supervisor.

Under normal circumstances, Construct-based operatives are assigned such resources by their supervisors. Under RSP protocols, however, you can make some requisition requests yourself! With a little bit of planning, you can leverage our mutual resources to prepare for your next contact with the Front Lines. Even field agents have these opportunities if they've achieved sufficient Rank and goodwill to do so. Although we all need to return to our local Construct when called in for duty, the same RSP benefits apply to operatives who've earned the proper Rank. Whether you're hidden on the Front Lines, safe at home, or exploring the galaxy, we want to make sure you have everything you need to succeed.

## Outfitting

First, speak to your manager about your basic supplies, technological and otherwise. You are geared up with the essential equipment you need for your mission. We draw on mutual resources, so please remember to return that gear in better shape than you received it. You do not personally own those resources, so we reserve the authority to withdraw your access to them at any time. Your Degree of Separation measures the degree to which we trust you, so once you've fallen to the 4th, 5th or 6th degree, we won't risk our best gear on you. Mundane supplies may include (but are not limited to) cars, weapons, communications equipment, and tools.

## Requisitioning

We know that agents come from a variety of backgrounds, and that sometimes you may want to draw upon your own. If you have experience with requisitions, you can make one attempt to justify the acquisition of additional equipment or assistance before the start of your mission. The final decision, of course, resides at your manager's discretion, so please contact your supervisor for more details.

## Outsourcing

Each Convention has its own special tech — such as a Black Suit's surveillance gear or a Void Engineer's Dimensional Science hypertech. Loyal agents of the Syndicate, however, often have the resources to attempt requisition of a piece of tech from another Convention. Again, consult with your supervisor for more details.

## Personal Contacts

You may also be tempted to call upon more personal backgrounds for gear, such as former allies, personal contacts, old mentors, or private patrons. Please limit your interaction with individuals from your oldlife. We are watching for threats to our security, and many consider these interactions to be suspicious. When possible, favor and reinforce connections with your newlife. The Union provides everything you need. If we don't provide it, you don't really need it.

## Sleepteaching

Some agents have access to temporary knowledge instilled by devices known as *sleepteachers*. Q Division can provide you with more details. The time between the meeting in which you receive your assignment and the time you return to the Front Lines — AKA your Req Phrase — is the best time to take advantage of this training. Keep in mind that sleepteaching is a time-consuming process, so such instruction may affect the time you have to acquire other resources. Also, you may be authorized to download some of your personality or memory into a database for storage before a hazardous mission. Use these opportunities wisely!

## Sympathizers

Every Convention has low-level agents and unEnlightened personnel who can help with missions. Such resources may be granted to Degree 2 or Degree 3 agents under specific circumstances, although those resources are temporary, typically for the duration of one mission. Once you've shown you're loyal enough to handle the responsibilities of a Degree 1 agent, you can manage your own resources in the field on a more permanent basis. Once you've proven you can see the big picture, you can direct these loyal associates to do your grunt work.

### Supplemental Data: Requisitions and Discipline

In game terms, a Technocratic character's ability to RSP comes through in the system for requisitioning temporary Background Traits. Details about this process can be found in the **Mage 20** entry "Membership Has its Privileges" (pp. 302-303), while the disciplinary process that can cost your character such privileges can be found in **The Book of Secrets** (pp. 223-230).

## Internal Affirmation

Citizen, every morning, you should look in the mirror and tell yourself how lucky you are to have found your newlife within the Technocracy. If you feel the need to talk to yourself in your private chambers, we encourage this kind of open introspection. Keep a blog! Write a diary! Feel free to document all your feelings and experiences! Our Enlightened agents include a high percentage of highly intelligent humans, so you may notice more unusual manifestations of self-affirmation. Geniuses can be eccentric, after all. Let's be honest with each other, shall we?

Have you seen someone talking to themselves? Do you feel the need to talk to someone who isn't there — or someone allegedly only you can see? Do you have dreams that you're someone else, or are somewhere you've never been before? Do you see and hear someone other operatives cannot detect? You are not alone. Feel free to confide these revelations to others. Because isolation and secrets are unmutual, we have trained specialists who can help you. If talking can't cure you, we have medicine that can.

## Little Fragments of Genius

Here in HR, we like to say that every agent has a little fragment of Genius. Some troubled people see manifestations of this “genius” as other, separate entities. Flashes of genius or insight might not be personified as another individual, however; such phenomena could appear as a pattern, a vision, or an encrypted message. We know everyone can benefit from a little bit of scrutiny, just in case they’re exhibiting this kind of suspicious behavior. The Union has learned to tolerate a certain measurable amount of eccentricity, but it’s vital to know where the limits of eccentricity begin.

Reality Deviants use far more disturbing rituals for dealing with these revelations. According to our interrogations, many so-called mages believe their “souls” harbor Awakened Avatars. Each Deviant mage believes that they have some sort of mystical spirit guide to aid them on their life’s journey. Pretty crazy, huh? Pulsing crystals, talking animals, the ghosts of dead friends, and stranger creations confront them on a regular basis. It’s no wonder so many of them go insane.

If you find yourself talking to someone who isn’t there, or hear voices in your head, seek help. If you find yourself deviating from the kind of sanity you normally enjoy within the safe boundaries of your Construct, please seek help *immediately*. Everyone has the odd dream now and then. Even the most stable individual might be found talking to himself. If you find your sanity slipping or your instability increasing, however, you may have begun to deviate from acceptable, mutual behavior.

True Genius comes from within. Through dreams, contemplation, study, and isolation, a Technocratic agent channels the power of pure Genius: Enlightened insight that illuminates the path to truth. While there are many benefits to collaborating with the diverse collective of Enlightened minds around you, you’ll find your greatest breakthroughs in isolation. Within the safe and supervised environment of your local Construct, we offer you plenty of time and resources to fuel that innovation. This way, when those breakthroughs come to you, the environment around you won’t carry the risks of the “real world” outside of our Union.

Anachronistic mages are far more reckless and vulgar than we are. They chase after any fleeting phenomenon that gives them more power. Whether they’re wallowing in mud, tripping on psychoactive chemicals, or making deals with devilish alien entities, Reality Deviants look for messages from the mystical, supernatural world around them. They believe they are powered by “Avatars” or “powerful souls,” and, allegedly, they claim that puts them in touch with arcane forces — a delusion that manifests in various personality disorders.

## The Epiphany

In your oldlife, many of you underwent a relatively sedate and reasonable experience when you first realized the benefits of Enlightenment. You had trained in science and reason, cause and effect, observable phenomenon and the scientific method. There was a moment when you had a great breakthrough. This involved more than jumping to the end of a math problem or fixing a machine that was broken. You had an *Epiphany*: a moment of clarity where your mastery of technology instantly leapt far ahead of the tech around you. For a rare few of you, your Epiphany didn’t involve a machine at all: you had a flash of psychic insight or a peek into the mind of another.

That was a dangerous time for you, though. If you had remained alone, you would have Deviated. You could have fallen into self-destructive behavior, risked everything for a dangerous innovation, or fallen to temptations of power. Fortunately, we found you. We shepherded you

away from the temptations of your old life and introduced you to the safety, security, and community of your new life. You may have continued to go about your daily business until your transfer to this Construct, or your departure may have been more sudden and dramatic. Either way, you found you were not alone, and you joined a new family in your local Construct. By mutual agreement, we now work for each other.

Citizen, we must warn you: Every Technocrat carries the risk of lapsing into unmutual behavior. Any one of us could fall into delusion or Deviance. On the Front Lines, Reality Deviants indulge in any pursuit they believe gains them power, and form cabals that reinforce their delusions, like cults grasping at the keys to creation. Our Union is here to make sure you don't walk down that path as well, because it leads to a dark and dangerous destination. Instead, you look to the future with your colleagues beside you, sharing your insights and creations for the betterment of all. We are creating new technology, and with your vision, we shall reshape it into a form that the Masses will one day possess. Until that time, we always live a little farther in the future than the rest of humanity manages to do.

Yet at the end of the day, unless you're in a barracks with other soldiers, campus housing with other scientists, or a similar communal environment, you're rewarded for your hard work with the opportunity to walk back into your private quarters or your personal laboratory. As a citizen in good standing, you hold those privileges. Even when you begin your first assignment outside the Construct, it's important to have some alone time as part of your work/life balance.

## Examples of Epiphany

In private moments, flashes of Genius occur, and you must remember that they come from within. No doubt you've heard the legend of Archimedes in his bathtub, Franklin with his kite, or Newton getting hit on the head with an apple under a tree. This sort of thing is perfectly natural among brilliant people. So long as you remember that it's all a symbolic representation of insight that's shaped by your Enlightened imagination, you have nothing to fear from such Epiphanies.

Your own flashes of Genius can manifest in many different ways:

- You may experience a revelation in a dream.
- You may see the solution to a problem in a way that others cannot.
- You may daydream about another time or place in which your vision is made manifest.
- You may notice a pattern in words or numbers that offers clues to the truth.
- You may imagine a conversation with a deceased friend or relative.
- You may perform your duties as if by instinct, at a level far beyond your previous performance.
- A seemingly natural phenomenon may give you a sudden insight.

Of course, it's theoretically possible that someone else could try to mislead you with false revelations or Epiphanies. And so, we train you to notice the difference between your own mind revealing the truth, and some Reality Deviant trying to lead you astray. Because you are Enlightened, you learn to tell the difference between personal inspiration and external sources of potential corruption.

We trust you to be wise, and insightful, and safe.

# Our Job: The Everyday Impossible

In that spirit, I'd like to conclude with a brief personal observation:

Anyone who tells you we won the fight for the Masses is lying to you. We didn't win — we just gave people vaccinations and smartphones. The fight for humanity has always been about more than merely ensuring that science develops. In our Union, we ensure that *humanity* develops — that the spark of curiosity and compassion develops, while also making sure that humanity doesn't cut its own throat. Sure, we may have had mobile communications before the Masses, but only the most deluded zealots try to convince you that we could see what shape it would take in the hands of billions of people. Social media provides the NWO with more surveillance data than we could ever need — and with it, more room for less-discerning individuals to manipulate a wider audience. Who would ever have imagined the concept of a “post-truth” society, a society where people are suffering from diseases brought back from the brink of extinction because some quack said that vaccinations were a bad idea? We live now in a world where food supplies are prevented from getting to those in need by incompetent bureaucrats and corrupt individuals, where technology that could revolutionize the world and save lives is held at ransom. Puritanical religious fervor has taken hold again, and with that boom in irrationality, old superstitions and divisions arise again. Preventable ecological disasters we had foreseen decades previously are now on the brink of being irreversible. We live in turbulent times, where news cycles that would once have shaken the world now fade into obscurity within a day.

Agent, it is *your* job, *my* job, the job of all of us here within our Union, to halt this degeneration of humanity before it's too late.

Does this sound like an impossible task? Well, get ready for the good news, because the people standing around you are some of the most outstanding individuals on the planet. We *do* the impossible, every day, because impossible things are literally our job.

NWO operatives are working tirelessly to prevent yet another world war breaking out — and they are succeeding. Syndicate suits just financed a city's complete conversion to renewable energy. Iteration X operatives just helped people in developing nations to print their own replacement body parts. Progenitor scientists, just this morning, developed a new form of maize that not only flourishes in arid conditions but also provides great nutritional benefit. Meanwhile, other Progenitors have just about convinced the Masses to accept technologies that allows us to print new and functioning organs. Yesterday, a group of Void Engineers saved Albuquerque, New Mexico, from a massive alien incursion. We aren't just *aware* of the problems in the world — we are ready for them, and we have a Time Table to prove it.

The Masses may dream of making a single real difference to the world. For us, that's a Tuesday.

Agent, make us proud. Our world is counting on us all.

Be seeing you!

**[LAYOUT: THE FOLLOWING SECTION SHOULD HAVE A DIFFERENT COLOR OF PAPER, AND PERHAPS A DIFFERENT FONT, TO DISTINGUISH IT FROM THE “NORMAL” TEXT IN THIS CHAPTER. IN THIS SECTION, THE TEXT “BREAKS CHARACTER,” PRESENTING INFORMATION THAT PLAYERS, NOT CHARACTERS, MIGHT KNOW.]**

## Above My Pay Grade: The Peak of the Pyramid

As our ominously bubbly narrator says, the upper levels of Technocratic leadership remain shrouded in secrecy from lower-ranking operatives. Things discussed at the grown-ups table must, by necessity, remain at the grown-ups table. Thus, the following data is not common knowledge among Technocrats below the Manager Tier, and it's often the stuff of rumor and speculation even among the upper ranks.

### Management Collectives

Just as agents and operatives report to individual supervisors, supervisors must refer to a collective known as Management. Their communal rank on the org chart is an elaborate amalgamation that remains impenetrable to the average agent. According to rumor, the relative positions of individuals within Management remains fluid, as these high-ranking Technocrats must continually conspire, maneuver, and jockey for position. Some Managers are ambitious, planning to elevate their status to a local Symposium; others value survival, resisting change and becoming entrenched in positions they consider to be relatively safe.

Typically, a Management collective remains isolated from day-to-day lives of individual agents, usually to ensure their objectivity as they levy dispassionate decisions removed from personal feelings or opinions. When an agent is brought before Management, that operative is usually asked to sit in a chair before a panel of at least four or five Managers, most of whom (or all of which) they probably never see again.

Agents would be wise to also keep their distance from Management collectives, since an ally who could be a boon to one's career today might become a liability tomorrow. Predicting what Management might do on any given issue is difficult, so agents are advised to report directly to their personal supervisors instead. However, the Union does have mechanisms in place that allow agents to issue declarations of suspicious behavior, or to report unmutual agents, indirectly to Management; such reports are often anonymous, except for the unpredictable cases in which they are not. We should also state the obvious: going to Management as a way of circumventing a supervisor's decision or directive can be very effective, but it may also become extremely harmful to an operative's career.

### The Schism

At the end of the last century, one of the Technocracy's greatest challenges involved the disparity between theory and practice. Supervisors who stayed away from the Front Lines (generally in Horizon Constructs that, during the Dimensional Anomaly metaplot, were destroyed at the end of the 20th century) often had idealized theories about how to win the war. Field-based amalgams found the reality of their decisions and imperatives very different. Agents began to refer to this phenomenon as *the Schism*. Some field operatives learned to adapt by being *very* selective about what they told their supervisors: just enough to justify success, but not enough to reveal the compromises they'd made to achieve it. Advances in telepresence and surveillance have made it harder than ever to conceal unmutual activity, but the conflict between ambitious goals and messy realities is still there. Successful amalgams learn that promotion is more than doing what you're told: It's knowing who to tell and what you really need to do to get ahead.

### Symposiums



Every large geographic area (and many of the planet's larger cities) has a council of high-ranking Technocrats who oversee the earthly Consensus. Agents expect these Symposiums to represent their interests, and so each Symposium needs at least one representative from each of the five Conventions. Lofty goals aside, each of these representatives allocates teams, troops, resources, and fronts like pieces on a chessboard. Every society of supernatural creatures and magick-wielding Reality Deviants must be investigated and tracked. It's impossible to go to war against all of them, however, so *someone* must set priorities determining which groups represent the most dangerous threats. If you can't kill every mage who isn't a proper Technocrat, after all, then perhaps you should focus on the worst of the worst. Thus, the regional Symposium determines the priorities of localized tasks and threats.

The word "symposium," when presented with a lower-case *s*, also refers to the formal meetings these august bodies conduct, complete with debate, speeches, status reports, compromise, logical arguments, and emotional appeals. In times of great crisis, an amalgam might be called to appear before a symposium hearing. That's usually a sign that something dramatic is about to happen to the team. When the higher echelon intervenes, accolades are won, punishments are levied, and reassignments change careers. In the 21st century, each symposium is usually held in a highly secure and protected Earthbound location. If the symposium group needs to relocate to an extradimensional location, there's a damn good reason they're employing such complicated logistics, and so the potential rewards and punishments for the agents involved increase accordingly.

In most campaigns for Earthly reality, a supervisor is most likely the highest-ranking Technocrat an agent ever encounters. Far beyond any fighting in the streets, Symposia compile reports for the powerful elite at the top of the pyramid. Occasionally, agents hear rumors about figures in upper Management issuing policies, supplanting one another in power-plays, or issuing new revisions to the Technocratic Time Table. Even then, however, identifying who's at the top of the pyramid is nearly impossible.

Some operatives have begun to suspect that the Symposia are acting with greater independence than they used to; perhaps there's a distinct lack of coordination between regional collectives and Symposia. The Technocracy in London, for example, doesn't necessarily function the same way as the Technocracy does in Shanghai or Hong Kong. The aforementioned Regional Management Initiative offers greater autonomy and independence for Symposia, even though everyone's on the same team—in theory, anyway.

Incidentally, if anyone wants to suggest this disparity means that reality Consensus in London is *slightly* different than reality Consensus in Shanghai, they had best do so quietly, because that's a *very* unpopular opinion in the Union.

Suggesting the Technocracy isn't truly unified is a very unmutual statement for any agent to make. It's best not to question what vision the Eye in the Pyramid is pursuing, because sometimes, seeing a picture that's any bigger than the one from your local Horizon Construct is extremely difficult. Masters and upper management live in a larger universe than mere field agents do. Earth is but one realm among many, and the highest echelons of power offer a Technocratic Manager the chance to realize alternatives to conventional or communal reality in the deepest parts of the universe.

Future Fates: A Technocratic Reorg?

Over time, the increasing number of Methodologies in the Union has led to increasing tensions within Conventions. As mid-level managers maneuver for power and position, they face the temptation of becoming more independent from the rest of their Convention. This has led to recurring rumors of an impending “reorg,” which should hardly seem surprising to anyone who’s worked for a large corporation.

“Why,” the skeptics whisper to each other, “should there be five Conventions when the Union has ten Spheres of influence? Why can’t Panopticon operate separately from the Ivory Tower? Why can’t the Progenitors form an organization dedicated to Life procedures and allow specialists in Matter to deal with more than pharmaceuticals?” Such sentiments are best whispered, because it’s the kind of speculation that many would consider unmutual or disloyal. The easiest answer is often “Because that’s the way we’ve always done it,” followed by the end of the discussion — or, in extreme cases, someone being strapped down to a chair in Room 101.

In the real world, many Sleepers fear reorgs. Redundancies bring job losses. Some managers get flung into positions of greater power, often embodying the Peter Principle: they rise to the level of their own incompetence. Others are dashed down and demoralized by demotion. No doubt a reorg in the Union could have these same dire consequences, and many more, besides.

As one might suspect, the Union goes to great lengths to ensure conformity and obedience, using both subtle and brute-force applications of Mind to reinforce both. A few paranoiacs fear the dissolution of the Union from within, but their supervisors have found that the best way to distract these malcontents involves keeping their guns pointed at any and all enemies, real or imagined, outside their fronts and Constructs. The Tower, they insist, must stand. Rumors of a massive reorg have been around for years. Whether it will occur one day is another matter entirely... a matter covered further in Unit 8.

## Fallen Commands?

It's worth noting that if, in fact, Nephandic infiltrators *have* corrupted the Technocratic Union, that infestation exists primarily at this level, dictating malignant policies to the lower Tiers and subverting, maneuvering, or simply destroying operatives and Constructs that dare to question their commands.

## Hidden Masters

Beyond the Horizon, outside the reality of the world we know, the Technocracy has absolute control over its more exotic realms. Humanity thinks of everything beyond Earth’s atmosphere as outer space; mystics rant about the Deep Umbra; the Union explores and defines the Deep Universe. The Masters of the Technocracy completely reform their own extradimensional realms according to their own ideals. Just as the Horizon Constructs orbiting the Earth are experiments in what the near future can bring, the pocket dimensions dominated by Technocratic Masters show visions of futures that may eventually become reality on Earth. Near the world we know, Technocrats command technology a few decades ahead of what the common populace knows. Within the Deep Universe, Masters (of either gender or at any nonbinary coordinate in between

them) wander down divergent possible timelines, using isolated populations as test subjects for experiments that may be — or, perhaps, should *never* be.

## Deep Universe Experiments

Each Convention has its own vision of what the future may be, although one of them has a curious alternative. For each organization, there's at least one legendary and persistent *Deep Universe Experiment*. Tales of such places are still whispered in the training crèches of initiates, but certain locations exist secretly, hidden even from the Earth-bound Symposia.

All Iteration X agents have heard the decades-old tales of the machine realm *Autocthonía*. In recent years, those cybernetic phantasies have been replaced by new iterations (so to speak) of that extradimensional locale: Realms where all human activity follows a relentless schedule. In all of them, tolerance for imperfection is low. Crèches of clones still pursue communal activities; all human organisms are merely parts of a greater whole; cyborgs have attained a degree of integration with their technology beyond the dreams and nightmares of mere 21st-century beings.

Void Engineers are well-acquainted with colonies established in the deepest parts of the Deep Universe. *The Darkside Moonbase*, hidden on the far side of Earth's moon, has a sinister reputation — one that many would consider a dystopia. Little has changed since the molding of its plastic corridors and the instillation of its archaic, yet self-replicating tech. Visionary in the 1970s, it may stubbornly survive into the 2020s.

By contrast, the Void Engineers' *Copernicus Research Station* is a shining beacon in the darkest nights of hyperspace: a vigilant icosahedron-shaped megalopolis that monitors and observes extradimensional and extraterrestrial races. For the sanity of Symposia, only a small fraction of the data they harvest is passed down as dire warnings to Earth's Union. Learning the truth about alleged “grey” aliens, the reptiloids, or the unfathomable Zigg'raugglurr can drive even Technocratic agents mad.

The Progenitors scrutinize many possible theories about alien life and cultivate them in Deep Universal ecosystems. Since the days when Void Engineer ethercraft first harvested samples from sentient fungal groves on other worlds, the children of the Void have since created vast alien gardens that bloom, shiver, and sing. *Mycolopolis* is one of the largest, although most agents don't know what happens there. Some travelers have heard tales of hybrid humans spanning the gap between fleshy and fungal sentients. Stranger tales exist of reshaped humans decanted to live in conditions of low-gravity, high-gravity, gaseous giants, and Earth orbit. Rare iterations of mycelial networks redefine the boundaries of individuality and identity. Of course, such creations would be quickly crippled by Paradox on Earth, but True Masters create myriad alternatives to the crude flesh that imprisons us.

George Orwell's *1984* was a rough draft for a possible dystopia of the New World Order. Would you like to see the final draft for their New World? Documentation for failed dystopias in the Deep Universe have been consigned to the “memory hole” of history, but Masters of the Psychodynamic Arts still attempt to manipulate human thought, paradigms, religion, and identity on entire populations of extradimensional expatriates. One mythical incarnation of such experimentation is called *Brit Noir*, a dimension where Orwell's dystopia has reformed in the guise of a futuristic never-ending, and eternally nocturnal, London cityscape. Cynics claim a few of these realms are merely mindscapes constructed for the interrogation, conversion, or

punishment of the most powerful Reality Deviants. After all, as the saying goes, “*It takes a Village to contain a Prisoner.*” In truth, the Ivory Tower has many reasons for experimenting with would-be Utopias. Why jockey for position with contentious Symposia when a psionic visionary can ascend to a pocket dimension that’s located far from the troubled conflicts of Earth? Someday, Earth will be ready to transform to accommodate the grandest visions of the Ivory Tower’s Masters. In certain regards, the transformation has already begun.

The Syndicate has arguably the greatest population of Masters on Earth itself. Selfishly realizing ideological theories seems dull compared to the chance to enjoy the sumptuous comforts of extreme wealth on our own planet. Bending the laws of space as casually as one exploits the loopholes of a tax return, a Syndicate Master can cultivate a vast estate, a penthouse paradise, or a luxurious retreat worthy of a percentage of a percentage of a percentage of the one percent. Some delude themselves into believing that living on Earth (instead of commuting from space) negates the troublesome complications of the Schism between Managers and employees. Agents would be wise to not correct them in this conceit. Rich Syndicate Masters like to believe they’ve retained their “common touch,” and if you make them feel insecure about it, they tend to intervene in the day-to-day affairs of lowly and overworked operatives. One narcissistic billionaire has the potential to make billions of people miserable by claiming to know the solution to all their problems. Whenever an elite plutocrat gets vengeful, he can use his personal vendettas to obliterate those who lack his vast power and privilege. If you choose to buy into his vision, *caveat emptor*.

#### Future Fates: Extradimensional Realms

Throughout the earlier **Mage** books, Awakened factions laid claim to spectacular Horizon Realms and other off-world locations. For the Technocracy in general, and the Void Engineers in particular, these Realms embodied the best and worst aspects of the groups in question. According to the **Mage Revised** series, the *Dimensional Anomaly* (aka, the *Avatar Storm*) cut those Realms off from Earth, destroyed most of them, and crippled the ability for mages to visit the Otherworlds at all. Considering that the Technocratic leadership was supposedly ensconced in Otherworldly headquarters, this incident makes huge differences in both the direction of a Technocratic chronicle and the composition of the Technocracy as a whole.

When addressing this situation, the Storyteller has three options:

- **It happened:** The Dimensional Anomaly wrecked the Technocracy’s off-world facilities, demolished its leadership, killed countless operatives and associates, and cost the Union inestimable amounts of money, power, and resources. Grand technologies have been lost forever. Legendary Realms like Autocthonina and the Copernicus Research Center were obliterated — or worse still, captured and corrupted by Otherworldly forces. Although the Void Engineers have worked hard to regain their previous glory, the Technocracy itself suffered a staggering loss — a loss all the more poetic considering that Technocrats caused the Anomaly in the first place. In this case, the **Revised**-era Convention Books lay out a subdued Technocracy that’s reconstructing itself in the wake of that titanic loss.
- **It happened a while back:** Going by **Revised** chronology, the Dimensional Anomaly occurred roughly 20 years ago. Since then, the Technocracy has

regrouped, rebuilt, and reestablished itself as a formidable organization. If this is true, however, the Union's new configuration still reflects that tremendous losses of life, leadership, and other resources. In place of the Realm-spanning Technocracy of pre-**Revised Mage** books, this Technocracy is leaner, fresher, younger, and more bound to Earth's material reality. A handful of Otherworldly headquarters exist, but they're rare, expensive, and used only for the most pressing emergencies and the most extreme experiments. Depending on the people who replaced the previous leadership, this could have made the Technocracy more reasonable and efficient than it had been before — or, conversely, could have hastened extremity and corruption at the top. Either way, the Technocracy has been radically changed from its 1990s incarnation and those changes may have benefited humanity as a whole, or perhaps made the world an even darker, more oppressive place.

- **It never happened at all:** If the Dimensional Anomaly never occurred then the Grand Old Men still preside over the Union from their Otherworldly retreats. The Void Engineers continue to plumb the Deep Universe, skirmishing with alien creatures and the most bizarre Mad and Fallen mages. The Cop and Dark Side Moon Base exist, recruits get trained far from the Masses, and the Union never took the phenomenal casualties associated with the Dimensional Anomaly and its aftermath. As a result, this Technocracy remains incredibly powerful, with near-limitless resources and a hidden leadership that suffers from extreme disassociation between the abstract theories they embrace and the realities of our 21st-century Earth.

Each option has certain dramatic possibilities and limitations. Although a Storyteller can hold off on deciding certain details, it's wise to decide ahead of time which Future Fate to pursue when dealing with a Technocratic chronicle.

## Upper Management

Some Masters of the Technocracy are remarkably hands-on in the application of their power, but it's easier for them to use such power far from Earth, where the threat of Paradox isn't as severe. More than a few Void Engineers command their own extradimensional starships, voidships, and ethercrafts, living the sort of lives of which science-fiction fans can only dream. Masters of Correspondence may frequent multiple dimensions, employing telepresence to appear before the representatives of Symposia, or even before a beleaguered relative on the Front Lines. Masterful troubleshooters can assemble teams of high-ranking former agents to travel to some of the aforementioned Deep Umbral experiments, or they may even discover a few that have been isolated from Earth's Union for far too long. And then there are the realms controlled by the Traditions, just ripe for the taking; storming someone else's Utopia is a dangerous game to play, but some people are never quite happy with their neighbors, no matter where they live.

As for Earth itself... well, anyone familiar with the crimes of Tradition mages knows what happens when a visionary with too much cosmic power decides to unleash it in a realm with a reality as limited as Earth. Perhaps we should be grateful that the Masters of the Technocracy forge new realities far from our own. Agents learn their trade by being secret and secure in their operations. A Master using all of his Enlightened authority to bring down the full force of his revelations would be a beacon to Paradox beyond the criminal threats of mere Reality Deviants.

Thus, the Technocracy's supervisors do their best to send glowing progress reports about Earth up the chain of command. As long as the numbers stay good, the Hidden Masters prefer the distractions of other dimensions. They withdrew from mundane concerns for a *reason*, after all, and so sudden intervention from beyond the Horizon is (fortunately!) so rare as to be nearly non-existent. Oh, and if any such events have occurred, we hereby disavow any knowledge of their occurrence.

Ascension leads to the stars. There's no need for a Master to wallow in Earthly mud. And on that note...

## Grand Old Men

In the days of the Order of Reason, centuries before the founding of the Technocracy, one of the most idealistic goals was immortality. *True* immortality is, of course, impossible: even if it worked, the resulting sentient being would gradually become less-than-human, or at least "divergent." When such experiments occurred, the safest place to conduct them was outside the world we know, in the limitless space of the Deep Universe.

By the dawn of the new millennium, a handful of Old Men from the early days of the Technocracy (and the latter days of the Order of Reason) had allegedly found their way into one of the many pocket dimensions beyond the Horizon. They're so far removed from agents on the Front Lines that any stories about them were (at best) heresy or (at worst) considered highly unmutual. Some Technocrats believe these Grand Old Men observed or even interfered in higher-level operations within the Union. Some claim that their isolation slowly drove them divergent or insane. Some even claim that Nephandic forces corrupted them, working on the idea that no amount of power is ever enough, and the only way to manage cosmic power would be by attaining *even more* cosmic power. Storytellers have made wild speculations about these Grand Old Men, and it is not the purpose of this paragraph to confirm or disavow any such tales.

## The Shadow Parliament

As the dimension of the Grand Old Men becomes more "distant" (in whatever way you choose to interpret that word), Management has formed a plateau on its org chart to fill in certain gaps. The Shadow Parliament is an advisory council consisting of one representative from each Symposium on the planet. Outsiders would be puzzled by the Parliament's ability to reach a consensus without one individual to chair the council, if they were capable of analyzing the proceedings in detail, but such outside scrutiny is rare. When a Shadow Parliament convenes, the requisite number of parliamentarians telecommute to a remote location on the Horizon, conduct their business, and return after arriving at their collective conclusions.

Like the Grand Old Men, the Shadow Parliament can relay its collective communication through a single humanoid avatar; this entity is usually dressed in white, although its appearance (including its ethnicity and gender) differs each time it manifests. Technocratic supervisors have come to know it simply as *Management* (or *Mgmt.*). Anyone possessing Enlightenment (in game terms, the Arete/Enlightenment Trait) can verify that its communication originates from the Shadow Parliament. While the council is in session, the Shadow Parliament can address Technocrats in a specific location using this avatar as its spokesperson.

Rumor has it that some high-ranking Tradition mages have attempted to replicate or hack this effect — allegedly all such attempts have failed; further rumors have suggested that the Reality Deviants responsible have been assaulted by a Shockwave of Iteration X troops. However,

rumors may or may not be true because they are, by their very nature, *rumors*. Management has neither confirmed nor denied their veracity.

## Control

Before the turn of the millennium, however, some Technocratic agents claim to have encountered manifestations of an entity known as *Control*. When Control manifests on Earth, this entity bestows messages that allegedly come from the legendary Grand Old Men. Some operatives claim to have spoken to an actual avatar or individual that calls themselves “Control”; other agents have received direct messages or visions that appear, to all available methods of verification, to originate from the Eye at the top of the Union’s pyramid.

With each passing year, however, contact with Control has diminished. Even suggesting that Control exists is considered, in many regions, an unmutual declaration. Cynics whisper (if they say anything at all on the matter) that if the Grand Old Men actually *do* still exist, they have far more compelling ideas to contemplate than the minor disputes of Symposium Managers or the indiscretions of everyday agents. Progressive-minded agents privately question why there’s any need for a cabal of ancient old men from a previous century to interfere in the Union’s operations at all, especially since such elders hardly represent or comprehend the concerns of 21st-century humanity.

Storytellers are empowered to define their own truth. *Is* there someone watching from the Eye in the Pyramid? If so, what might their agendas be, and what sort of actions might they take in the current era of instability? Are these parties in any sense “sane” by Earthly human standards, or might the disconnection of years, distance, and inhuman perspective have warped them into something awful, deranged, perhaps utterly, malignantly — or still worse, dispassionately — *alien*?

Suffice it to say that at the highest echelons of the Union there may not be any one cabal or collective consciousness directing the Union. That possibility raises a lot of questions. Could earthly regions diverge in their respective Consensus realities? Could Horizon Constructs become increasingly independent from each other? Could the Union itself reorganize its system of Conventions and Methodologies to pursue greater autonomy and a less-centralized organization? The answer to each of those questions might be a resounding *no*, but if the answer to any of them is *yes* then the chronicles that result could unfold on a cosmic scale.

The world, as always, is yours.

**[END SPECIAL FORMATTING REQUEST.]**