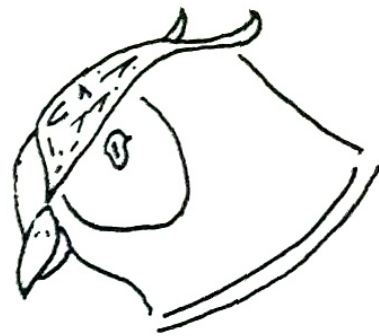


What IS the Widsith Institute?

A combination of a charitable organisation and a scientific, venture-led research Institute.

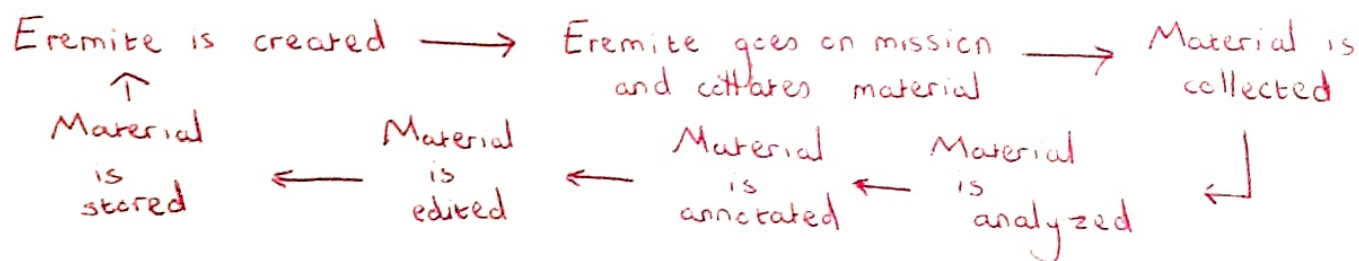


It employs many people, mostly editors and scholars of a creative bent, to analyze, annotate and alter its vast physical archive of material.



Much of this material is anthropological in nature, and is derived from the findings and possessions of the Eremites, the closest thing to field agents that the Institute has.

The typical formula is:



The Eremites are much like celebrities, or even mythological figures, to those who are scholars within the Institute. Although they are employed by the same company, they are never seen, and it is unknown whether there is only one a time. However, their lineage is well-known, though no-one seems to know in what order they come, chronologically.

It is not clear, at the outset, where the funds for the Widsith's operation comes from, though it is implied that it is a very small number of donors.

There are other departments in the Widsith Institute, most of which operate around the Institute's hierarchy corporate structure.

As far as the player knows, they are the following:

The Wormery - Where diseases are created and stored.

The Marvel Ouse - Where material is stored when it is not being analyzed.

Scheele's Green - Where editors conduct their work.

The Parlay Suites - A "clean room" environment where diseases are delivered and any physical contact takes place.

The Institute controls its staff through the application of bespoke diseases. The main benefit of these diseases is that they provide mental benefits vital to understanding and editing the material.

The players, who only occupy the editor faction, do not immediately physically encounter those in other departments, but all use the diseases in their own way. All of the diseases cause physical pain and degradation, in often spectacular ways. This serves several functions:

- To prevent employees contacting the outside world;
- To control their movement & promotion;
- To provide badges of honour in the form of spectacular physical effects and the bragging rights of dealing with pain;
- To make rank visually accessible;
- To improve one's work the higher one goes as a form of evolution.

As one moves higher in the Institute, one is lonelier, less physically capable, more quarantined but better at their job.

Each department views every other through a veil of *mythology* - any journey outside one's own department is not to be undertaken lightly and there is a truly "hic sunt dracones" philosophy. As you rarely meet someone from another department, suspicion is the order of the day. The Institute manipulates this to improve performance within departments, but this does make cross-department efficiency drop.

At this point, it is unknown why the Institute commissions the *Eremites*, and then analyses their work. The *editors* are told that they must root out inconsistencies, and find the meaning of the work. As for the *editing*, it is unclear why this occurs. There is obviously a party line which should be towed, but currently it is not clear what that line is. It is also unclear why these pieces are being held, other than for posterity.

The editors, to encourage concentration and avoid accidental promotion, wear suits and hoods of hair and rubber lined with bristles. These bristles encourage a certain degree of distraction, to promote original thought. On the chest is a gilt frame, in which is displayed the occupant's chest behind glass, and therefore their disease and *quasi-coat-of-arms* which has its own language and designation. The suit has no pockets, and the players are tied to their desks where their possessions are.

Up until this point, all of the work of the Institute has been *analog*. The player enters on the dawn of digitisation, where the Miasma Eremite's *opus* is being used as a testbed for crowd-sourced analysis.

Players will find more of the Miasma Content as they go through and begin the process of digital analysis. This is, however, a large change for the Institute, and will certainly cause problems as they move to a plane of existence which will destroy the physical archive and require the diseases less and less.

The Institute has a series of designations which are designed to elegantly categorise everything, including speech, diseases, text, material and everything else in between. There are 3 different categorisations for different things, which a new editor can choose to understand.

The system, mainly consisting of punctuation, comes from mashing a keyboard in pain, and indeed the original designations of things come from this same source to produce a random string.

In terms of a physical space, the player is outside when they begin; if they look up from their desk, they are on a huge hill; it is very regular and round, and covered in grass and desks spaced three feet apart. This is where the editors work, on Scheele's Green. This is meant to evoke a pig farm, something not unlike a prisoner's camp, and an ancient society like Skara Brae. They are at the mercy of the weather, which can authentically "weather" the things that they are working on, as well as give them colds - they sleep at their desks, and their suits protect them from the worst of it. There is also a river that flows into a nearby ocean.

They are not penned in, but are entirely isolated. If they try to escape, where, exactly, will they go? They are entirely trapped in their suits. They will die of thirst, and dehydration, long before they can get to any sort of civilisation.

There are several other parallels which I think are interesting:

- The editors are given a form of "field work" to do.
- This gives ample room for story expansion.
- It up-turns the sequestered nature of clandestine organisations.
- It really reminds me of outward bound "team-building" exercises.
- It gives them fresh air (though they are in suits, obviously) & disperses disease.
- It is what I would call a "folklore landscape".

As for the other departments, at the foot of the hill are the entrances to caves. All other departments are underground, like support departments can be in real life, and if they need a disease, an artifact or a disease, they must go below. It creates a sort of folklore, a modern mythology. The factions below hate the editors (because of their hand in digitising) & so treat them badly. Each simple stationery run becomes a quest.

In terms of hierarchy, the Institute has a remarkably flat structure, with the only marker being disease & experience. People tend to become more honest as they get higher up in terms of experience, but absolute authority resides in the written word. All missives must be considered & acted upon.

The Eremites are like gods, their lineage uncertain, but The Black Crown, their disease, the worst of all.