

ADVENTURES ON-LINE

Meet friends in a dungeon!

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Antic Staff Writer

Playing mainframe computer games is one of the most popular pastimes on the major on-line computer information services. It's surprisingly popular, when you consider how much cheaper it would be to buy one of the many similar adventures available on disk.

"It can be extraordinarily expensive to play adventures by the minute," freely admits The Source's public relations manager, Nancy Beckman. "It's not just students on their dad's accounts who are playing. There's a cross section of all types of business people sneaking off during the day to play on-line adventure games."

The lure of on-line gaming is easier to understand when you look at its two unique features—multiplayer capability and instant feedback.

MULTIPLAYER FEEDBACK

Multiplayer adventures like CompuServe's MegaWars (space battle a la Star Trek) and Plato's Moria (Dungeons & Dragons fantasy role-playing) can be used by up to 100 players at the same time. You find yourself adventuring along with students, lawyers or corporate vice presidents from places as far apart as Anchorage, Silicon Valley, Boston and New Orleans.

The other unique feature of on-line gaming is its capability for immediate communication with other players around the country, says Pat Phelps, manager of CompuServe's CB net-

work. While playing, without interrupting a game, any player can switch into conversation with teammate or opponent. Terminal talking ranges from cursing the enemy to pleas for help from allies.

This interaction continues outside game time on the CompuServe Multiplayer SIG (Special Interest Group), Plato's notesfiles, or The Source's bulletin boards. These electronic forums are always available to provide opportunities for gamers to compare notes, exchange tips, or just chat.

CompuServe's main multiplayer games are MegaWars II and MegaWars III. Using color graphics and sound on compatible terminals, MegaWars II is designed for two teams of up to four players each. The object of the game is to destroy all four enemy ships while capturing as many enemy and neutral planets as possible. You enter the game as a cadet, and attempt to work your way up through the ranks to admiral. MegaWars III is similar, except that up to 100 players can participate in one game simultaneously.

Plato's multiplayer games include Empire, their team-oriented space combat in the MegaWars mode, SeaWar, a grid boardgame simulation, and two fantasy role-playing adventures, Moria and Drygulch. All major Plato multiplayer games are supported by notesfiles (bulletin boards).

MORIA AND DRYGULCH

In Moria, as you explore the dungeon you can join with teams of players—frequently more experienced—or continue to risk wandering on your own. The screen shows you a detailed line drawing view of the scene ahead of you, including monsters, doors and corridor walls, along with status charts for your character's current strength and powers.

Plato's Drygulch is set in an Old West town. You are a miner trying to live long and prosper, which is not easy when hazards abound in the mines and in the wastelands surrounding the town. You must eat and drink enough to keep healthy, make sure you have enough prospecting equipment, etc. There are elections for sheriff, mayor and mine inspector. Each position offers potential for added fun and profit, election usually requires 10 to 12 votes.

In addition to multiplayer games, all three services offer a selection of the classic computer adventure games. These include versions of Hammurabi, a game that lets you govern ancient Sumeria. Avoid famine by paying attention to grain planting and harvests, taxes, birthrate, and so on. You can also expect to find Lunar Lander simulations, the original Trek space war and the original Colossal Cave text adventure.

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MORE DUNGEONS

Also available on each service are single-player dungeon games like CompuServe's Castle Telengard and the Dungeons of Kesmai, The Source's Blackdragon, and Plato's Labyrinth. All allow you the usual role-playing choices in establishing your character's attributes, such as race, intelligence, dexterity and charisma. Typically, you equip your character with spells and weapons, and then venture down into the dungeons in search of monsters and treasure. Games on CompuServe and The Source provide rudimentary graphics (keyboard symbols like +, *, /, and —) in a top-down map overview. Plato offers more sophisticated graphics for an eyewitness viewpoint. On The Source, you'll find Castle-

quest and Explore. Both are well-written text adventures for players with prior experience in this genre. Because they are not renditions of previous works, they are sources of new challenge. They are also easier to read than the text on CompuServe, which uses a very slow mainframe computer that pauses several times on each screen of text during peak usage times (late afternoon to late evening).

SHORTCUT COMMANDS

Getting to adventure games in the three major on-line systems is not hard.

CompuServe has direct access page addresses for games including: GO GAM-200 for the original adventure, GO GAM-201 for the new adventure, GO GAM-219 for The House of Banshi, GO GAM-217 for the Scott

Adams games, GO GAM-260 for the Dungeons of Kesmai, GO GAM-320 for Castle Telengard, GO GAM-305 for MegaWars II, GO GAM-105 for MegaWars III, and GO GAM-300 for the multiplayer game SIG.

To access games in The Source, type HELP GAMES at the command level to get an on-line listing.

In Plato, select the main menu option to run Plato programs. Then type in the game's name (drygulch, labyrinth). Some game files require a zero in front of the name (0empire, 0moria). Notesfiles include morian (for Moria), gulchnts (for Drygulch), and empnotes (for Empire). The original adventure game can be accessed by typing rezadv1. Using the Plato index, you can get a list of all games.



Bulletin Board Update

(All times are local standard times for the particular board)

Arizona

Amis Outpost (602) 578-0784
24 hours
Twilight Zone (602) 790-8805
24 hours

California

Compucat (408) 353-1836
6 p.m.-9 a.m., M-F
Hermit (707) 428-3077
24 hours
Wizardry (818) 346-4343
24 hours
Interact-Sylmar (818) 367-0324
Interact-Van Nuys (818) 902-1477
S.F. Valley Green
Machine (818) 368-1661
S.F. Valley RBBS (818) 368-5801
Granada Hills Energy
Group (818) 360-5053
Starship Atari (415) 387-2190
24 hours

Rat's Nest (408) 249-6946
Dark Tower (408) 248-5135
Moonbeam (408) 773-9326
GGBBS (415) 282-6138

Canada

Castle Greyhawk (514) 325-4310
Evenings

Florida

Star Raiders (305) 226-1452
Swap Shop (305) 878-1422
24 hours
Software Library (305) 845-6466
Jax Forem (904) 733-4515
Beach Forem (904) 246-8133

Indiana

AMIS Bulletin
Board (219) 824-5198

Illinois

Electric Co. (312) 221-0171
Ray's Outer Limits (312) 933-1071

Maryland

Forem Hotline (703) 683-3944
Rickey Moose (301) 474-7591

Michigan

MACE Main (313) 978-1685
MACE West (313) 582-0657
MACE Trading Post (313) 882-5909
MACE Ethernet (313) 531-1701
(all four are 24 hours)

New Jersey

Enterprise BBS (201) 689-0492
Gemini After Dark (201) 267-0988
6 p.m. to 9 a.m., all day Sunday
JACG BBS (201) 549-7591
24 hours

New York

Colossal Caves (516) 673-3141
24 hours
Metal Board I (516) 742-5949
Metal Board II (516) 944-3116
Starship Atari (516) 626-6990

Rhode Island

AARI BBS (401) 521-4234

Texas

The Midnight
Turtle (214) 783-7548