



A History of Dungeons & Dragons

by Lev Lafayette

The story of the role playing game hobby, from tabletop, to computer, to networked massive multiplayer online RPGs, all comes down to Dungeons & Dragons (and arguably before that Braunstein, but that's a story for a different article). The core structure of player-controlled characters, in a crossover between wargame and "improvised radio theatre" (RuneQuest, 1978), remains consistent and has its origins with D&D. Whilst there are many examples of colourful episodes in the history of the game and the various companies that have been involved in its publishing, finding a summary single article which covers the story is often difficult. This is an attempt to bring together some of the major features of the various game editions and the changes in publishers over the years.

Original Edition and Tactical Studies Rules

The origins of Dungeons & Dragons are under some dispute. Co-author Dave Arneson claims that there is little in the original fantasy supplement to the medieval Chainmail wargame rules that are directly transposed to Dungeons & Dragons. Instead he emphasises his own single-unit variant in the Blackmoor campaign as having greater influence [3], along with levels for each of these units. Gary Gygax, claims that whilst Arneson's variant on Chainmail was important, nevertheless says "The D&D game draws from its rules, and that is indisputable. Chainmail was the progenitor of D&D.." It should be mentioned however that Chainmail did have single-unit counters for heroes and superheroes and, by the second edition, fantasy rules as well. The difference of the relative importance of the two designers would eventually lead to a legal dispute over royalties.

Whilst the original Chainmail was published by the small-press Guidon Games by 1973 it has closed down. Gygax sought an publisher for his new single-unit fantasy adventure game called Dungeons & Dragons. However, as no publisher was forthcoming, Gygax and Don Kaye formed Tactical Studies Rules in October 1973 to self-publish their products, with \$2,400 in startup capital - at the time median family income \$12,051. In 1974, using Kaye's basement as the operations base of the new company, they published 1,000 copies of D&D, and selling them for \$10 a box (dice were an extra \$3.50). Towards the end of the year, Brian Blume was introduced to the capital with a further \$2,000. Kaye served as President of the partnership, Blume as Vice President, while Gygax held the title of Editor. In January 1975, a second print run of 1,000 was published. Don Kaye died suddenly at the end of January 1975 and his wife Donna Kaye, looked after the administrative and accounting tasks for a brief period of time.

With Don's passing and Donna's disinterest in gaming, a new corporate structure was developed, TSR Hobbies, and then incorporation as TSR, Inc, purchasing Donna's share. The original TSR Hobbies stock agreement, executed by Gygax and Blume on August 1, 1975, awarded Gygax 150 shares of stock and Blume 100; however subsequent investments from the Blume family - some \$34,000 immediately after establishment - included 200 shares to Melvin Blume, and another 140 to Brian Blume. TSR and Dungeons & Dragons began to expand; another 2,000 item print run of D&D in October 1975, and an increasing stock of games (including Dungeon! and Empire of the Petal Throne, and Boot Hill. In 1976 the supplements Greyhawk, Blackmoor, Eldritch Wizardry, and Gods, and Demi-gods & Heroes, and began hosting GenCon, all contributing to \$300,000 in revenue. The company also hosted the first GenCon in 1976 which included the first D&D open tournament.

The original Dungeons & Dragons came in a small brown box, three A5 books with a cardstock cover, saddle-stapled,

with a single-column justified text and sans-serif text, plus a handy booklet of reference sheets. The brief table of contents is marked in each book as "Index". The artwork throughout is thoroughly amateur in technique, creatively simplistic (the Amazon adventuring in her briefs apparently appeals to simple interests), and typically without context with the text. The books describe the scope of the work; "Men & Magic" (32p), "Monsters & Treasure" (40p), "The Underworld & Wilderness Adventures" (36p) and also indicates quite a reasonable organisation of the text's structure (and makes up for some pretty bad organisation within these structures), and come with the subtitle "Rules for Fantastic Medieval Wargames Campaigns Playable with Paper and Pencil and Miniature Figures" - the notion of roleplaying games had not yet been invented. This is a single-unit fantasy wargame. The writing is quite informal with moments of Gygax's classic style and humour, but is mostly terse.

The opening book makes an interesting inclusion of Avalon Hill's "Outdoor Survival" as recommended equipment, along with dice, "Chainmail", D&D itself, along with the usual paper, pencils, etc, and of course imagination and "1 Patient Referee". The latter is certainly understandable given it is also recommended that there be one referee per twenty players. Three classes of character and racial advantages and restrictions are described; Fighting Men (Men, Elves, Dwarves, "and even Hobbits"), Magic Users (Men and Elves), and Clerics (Men only). Character class restrictions are noted at this point as well; Fighters have access to all weapons and armour, Magic-Users have no armour and a dagger only, and Clerics cannot use edged weapons. Dwarves are limited to 6th level, but have advantages in dungeoneering and magic resistance. Elves can be limited to 4th level fighters or 8th level magic-users and can switch between the two between adventures. Hobbits are limited to 4th level, have magic resistance, and "will have deadly accuracy with missiles as detailed in CHAINMAIL". A two-page equipment list is provided along with a coin-grained encumbrance system.

Abilities are Strength, Intelligence, Wisdom, Constitution, Dexterity, and Charisma, rolled in 3d6 in order, with some transfers allowed at varying values once the character class is selected. Ability bonuses provide bonus experience, add hit points, provide bonuses to missile attacks. Common is specified as the universal language along with alignment tongues, along the Law-Neutrality-Chaos range. Gold-piece based experience points are introduced, with modifications based on the dungeon level of the monster. There is also the fascinating implication by example that total hit points are rolled each level gain. Different combat matrixes are provided for Men and Monsters with a d20-roll high versus target number based on armour class; it's a wonky progression so the tables are necessary. All attacks do 1-6 points of damage, regardless of weapon. Also provided is a Cleric vs Undead table with the classic chance, turn, or destroy results. However the majority of the first book is taken up with spells and spell descriptions for Magic-Users and Clerics. Some 92 spells are provided for spell levels 1-6 each with a few lines apiece. The classics are there of course; the relatively over-powered Sleep spell, the d6 per level Fireball, and so forth. Of note is the short range of the Lightning Bolt, Reincarnation based on the alignment table, Raise Dead doesn't work on Hobbits, and with spells limited to sixth level, there is no Wish etc.

The second book, "Monsters and Treasure" is just that. It starts with an statistical table of the Monsters in creature type order, followed by an alphabetical listing of some fifty Monsters, typically a paragraph of description, followed by magic/maps determination, descriptions of magic items, their saving throws, and treasure tables. Monster statistics are simple the number appearing, movement rate, armor class, hit dice, treasure type and the amusing spelling error, "% in liar" (medusae are typically liars, nixies are compulsive about it, but lycanthropes can be trusted by their word). The monsters are the classic types with the games own contributions, such as the Purple Worm, and with innovative features (e.g., wights removing experience levels). Dragons, as the namesake of the game, get a few pages of description, are distinguished by six types and have variation in breath weapon attack and hit-dice by age. The magic items table initiates the enormous bias towards magic swords, along with their alignment and intelligence. Although making up only 5% of magic items, the miscellaneous magic items are the most interesting; including the ring of three wishes.

The third book initiates discussion of the idea of "mazy dungeons", with various tricks and traps described. The concept of dungeon level having a rough equivalence of monster strength and rewards becomes apparent by the various tables. For the wilderness encounters translation notes are provided for use of Outdoor Survival (e.g., catch basins are

castles, buildings are towns etc). Castle inhabitants are determined randomly with a rather exotic array of creatures commonly as guards and retainers. Wilderness adventures and encounters convert feet to yards for distance, and use hexagon maps rather than grids. Encounters are based on random determination based from terrain type. Several pages are offered on castle construction and upkeep and seaborne combat and encounters. Finally, there were supplements for Greyhawk, Blackmoor, Eldritch Wizardy, and Gods, Demigods, and Heroes. These added the thief class, the paladin sub-class of fighter, druids incorporated HD type by class, asymmetric ability bonuses, damage by weapon type instead of all doing 1d6,

Growth and Bifurcation: Dungeons & Dragons and Advanced Dungeons & Dragons

In 1977, Dungeons & Dragons effectively split. Initially the idea was that there would be an introductory Basic Set Dungeons & Dragons game that could lead players to Advanced Dungeons & Dragons. In this year the Advanced Dungeons & Dragons Monster Manual was released, to be followed with the Players Handbook in 1978, and the Dungeon Masters Guide in 1979, all by Gary Gygax. However, rather than remaining an introduction to Advanced Dungeons & Dragons a new edition of Basic D&D was released in 1981 by Tom Moldvay, followed by an Expert set in the same year by Dave Cook. These became a completely new game in its own right, eventually becoming what would be known among fans as BECMI (Basic, Expert, Companion, Masters, Immortals) Dungeons & Dragons.

The 1977 Basic Set Dungeons & Dragons is a strange creature in many ways. Written by outsider and fan, John Eric Holmes, M.D., a need was identified to provide an introductory version of the original D&D in a way that would be accessible to younger players and to expand the market; the Introduction read: "Dungeons & Dragons is a fantastic, exciting and imaginative game of roleplaying for adults 12 years and up." The book is described attributed to Gygax and Arneson, with Holmes listed as the editor. There is an interesting change of emphasis here, with the subtitle of the game being "Rules for Fantastic Medieval Role Playing Adventure Game Campaigns". Note the explicit difference from original Dungeons & Dragons. Designed only for characters of levels 1 to 3, the Preface explicitly states "Players who desire to go beyond the basic game are directed the Advanced Dungeons & Dragons books".

The colourful box cover of a red dragon on a pile of treasure is reprinted in blue tone on the 48 page rulebook; the uncredited artist is David Sutherland III. Other internal art is by Donald Trampier and the whimsical Tom Wham. It's of average technique and above average creativity, and usually more of non-contextual filler, rather than being associated with the text. The writing style itself is semi-formal, whilst the structure is somewhat chaotic. The table of contents is comprehensive, and needs to be and whilst there is no index, there is two pages of charts and tables at the back of the book. Apart from that the rules are very similar, albeit in a reduced version, to the somewhat confused collection of pamphlets that ultimately constituted original Dungeons & Dragons.

Each of the standard characteristics are determined by a 3d6 roll, with a reduced range of effects for high and low scores (e.g., there are no strength bonuses for hit or damage), and some abilities for characters to move their ability scores around depending on class. The classes available for play are Fighting Men, Magic-Users, Clerics, and Thieves, with the non-human races of Dwarves, Elves, and Halflings also available. They are also classes of sorts, with all Dwarves and Halflings being Fighting Men, except if they opt to be thieves, in which case see the rules in Advanced Dungeons & Dragons. Elves also have this option, but the 'average Elf' is a combination Fighting Man and Magic-User. The various races have the sort of bonuses as mentioned in original Dungeons & Dragons, this time with the Halfling attack bonus with missile weapons included! The rules also mention that Advanced Dungeons & Dragons will include new sub-classes including paladins and rangers (fighting men) monks and druids (clerics), illusionists and witches (magic-users), and assassins (thieves). Whatever happened to witches? Alignment is now a two-dimensional axes of Lawful-Neutral-Chaos and Good-Neutral-Evil, and a brief equipment chart oddly does not correlate or even remotely assist with the encumbrance rules.

As previously established, dungeon level roughly equates with monster level. Experience points are based on monster hit dice plus bonuses with a division from character level. The game provides for experience levels one to three with charts for the aforementioned classes; interesting the elf (being a magic-user/fighter with 1d6 hit points doesn't quite match with the charts which would be $(1d8+1d4)/2$. The smaller halfling receives a 1d6 rather than a 1d8 for hits.

Magic-users have a maximum number of spells depending on their intelligence and saving throws against from magic spells to dragon breath depend on class, with particular bonuses for the lucky dwarves and halflings.

A few pages are spent on describing the spells available to magic-users and clerics with clearly stated range and duration according to spell level. Third level magic-user and second-level cleric spells are listed, but not described. The combat system follows, very briefly, with different tables for monsters and character classes cross-referenced to armour class providing a threshold 'to hit' number from a d20. Brief notes are provided for special weapons, such as fire, poisoned weapons, and holy water, along with variant ranges for missile weapons. All weapons do 1d6 damage, initiative is determined by the dexterity ability, and the parry provides a -2 attack penalty, but cancels the defender's attack roll.

At twelve-and-a-half pages, the monster descriptions take up the largest portion of the rulebook. These are described briefly, typically with a short paragraph constituting description and tactics. Most of the text is the stat block of movement, hit dice, armor class, treasure type, alignment, attacks, and damage. The namesake of the game, Dragons, receive a page in their own right with their variant size, age, hit points, breath weapon, and colour. A great number of the creatures listed (dragons, giants, purple worms, vampires) are far more powerful than most 3rd-level parties could hope to achieve so the utility of mentioning them in the basic set is questionable. The rest of the book consists of a description of the treasure types, the resultant magic items and an impressive little scenario which, whilst in the style of an somewhat inexplicable old-school dungeon crawl with relatively random populations, does have some plot development potential as well.

Alongside the production of Basic set Dungeons & Dragons was the famous series of hardback books that would serve as the canonical standard of roleplaying games for many years to come; the AD&D Monster Manual, Players Handbook, and Dungeon Masters guide. The first two, of 112 pages and 128 pages respectively, had absolutely superb binding, designed to last for decades, if not centuries. The Dungeon Masters Guide is less well-bound at 240 pages, but still reasonably well even compared to contemporary products. Whilst the monster menagerie of the Monster Manual is a fair piece of work, the famous temple plundering of the Players Handbook and the efreit of the DMG stand as iconic images of the roleplaying hobby as a whole. In each publication the the quality of interior art was fairly good (although the boundaries of acceptable technique was pushed on occasion in the Monster Manual), but usually without context. On occasion they told quite a story on their own right. Both the Players Handbook and the Dungeon Masters Guide suffer from the combination of sheer size and sub-optimal internal organisation (e.g., lack of chapters). Notably these are authored by Gary Gygax and not Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson.

The Monster Manual was an alphabetical list of over two hundred creatures. There is a heavy bias towards the mythic fantasy of medieval European or Ancient Hellenic origin, although this is not exclusively so by any stretch of the imagination and some (e.g., Doppelganger) are quite inaccurate. Approximately 1/2 of the text consists of the most inane creature statistics and military organisation, which establishes their role in the game as an object to kill and with treasure to steal. One receives a full complement of combat abilities, but only a modicum, if any, information on where the creature actually lives, how it interacts with members of its own kind and different species, what it eats, and how it reproduces. Some of the more useful rules and tables (e.g. a summary of creatures, encounter tables etc) are found in the DMG instead.

As for the Players Handbook, the game system is expressed as a modified version of previous additions. All ability scores now have actual influence on the game system. Various minimums and maximums are applicable for character race and class (e.g., maximum strength for a female elf is 16). Some ability scores affect specific activities in a class-based manner, and Strength, of all abilities has the potential of "exceptional strength" is expressed on a percentile on scores of 18, but only for Fighters and their subclasses. Racial stock limits classes and levels. Only humans may be unlimited in level across all classes, but almost all classes can be unlimited in the Thief class, except Half-Orcs, who can be unlimited in the Assassin subclass. To say the least, some of the race and level restrictions make very little sense; Elves, the archetypal woodland sentient species, cannot be rangers or druids, but their half-elven cousins can. Races also affect ability scores, but one must confess even the greatest modifications (+1 or -1) are very mild. The two

axes alignment system is included.

The equipment lists has a surprising emphasis on somewhat obscure pole arms with weapons having penalties and bonuses against particular armour classes, although some combinations are equivalent. Weapons also vary in damage against whether the opponent is small-medium or large. Approximately half the book is taken up with spell descriptions. These are arranged by class (Cleric, Druid, Magic User, Illusionist) and level of power. Each spell must be memorised on a daily basis with the total distribution determined by class and rank. Each spell is differentiated by range, duration, area of effect, components (verbal, somatic and/or material), casting time and saving throw modifications. There is also a Psionics system, which is notable for amusing modes of attack and defense remotely based on the Freudian trichotomy ("Id Insinuation", "Ego Whip"), and a rather unplayable "psychic strength point" system. The final section of the book includes an alignment graph and the planes of existence, including the rather evocative assignment of Earthly polytheistic pantheons within the AD&D alignment system.

In the DMG, AD&D states itself as belonging to the game-school as opposed to the realism-simulation school. As a whole it is a collection of almost random tables and rulings on the running of the game for the numerous cases that could be encountered. From a character perspective, there's variable generation of ability scores, rulings on spell effects, an extremely deadly disease and infection table, secondary skills, numerous hirelings and men-at-arms, lycanthropy, pricing, and clerical spell acquisition. There are extensive encounter tables differentiated by terrain, movement, and perceptual abilities, followed by combat tables (the one minute round). "Realistic combat", with reduced lengths of rounds, individual attacks and parries, hit locations, specific wounds and critical hits are rejected as "not the stuff of heroic fantasy", a very dubious literary statement, and looking quite odd alongside issues such as weapon speed factors (which sometimes allow multiple attacks on tied initiative) or the cumbersome unarmed combat rules. There is, of course, a very fairly hefty magical research and items section, along with extensive appendices on random dungeon generation and the like. What is most telling in the DMG is the exploration of Gygax's thoughts on game design and play which a strange combination of the insightful, the unsystematic, and the arbitrary.

In addition to these core books there were numerous supplements, including *Unearthed Arcana* which included new races, classes, and other material to expand the rules in the *Dungeon Masters Guide* and *Players Handbook*. The *Dungeoneers Survival Guide* and *Wilderness Survival Guide* provided both mundane setting information for players and DMs alike in such environments and provided a non-weapon proficiency system that would form the foundation for future skill systems. There was also the first edition of *Deities and Demigods*, which was mostly gods as monster stat-blocs, and *Manual of the Planes* which expanded on the Appendix of the *Players Handbook* into the difficult planar environments.

In 1981 a new edition of *Basic Rules Dungeons & Dragons* was released with Tom Moldvay as editor. In a boxed set with the famous module, *B2 The Keep on the Borderlands* and with striking cover art by Erol Otus, it was clearly written, and well organised with an extensive table of contents and index. Whilst covering levels 1-3 (like the Holmes edition), it was followed up by an *Expert rules* published in the same month by Dave Cook and Steve Marsh, and with a clever supplementary cover again by Otus. These would be replaced by the Frank Mentzer editions of the rules with artwork by Larry Elmore. A new *Basic* and *Expert* edition would be released in 1983, an *Companion* set in 1984 (character levels 15-25), a *Masters* set in 1985 (levels 26-36), and an *Immortals* set in 1986. A compiled and impressively bound hardback was released in 1991, edited by Aaron Allston, who also revised the immortals rules with *Wrath of the Immortals* in 1992. An often overlooked but as a matter of apparently deliberate design, there was a gradual increase in the recommended minimum age from *Basic D&D* upwards; aged 10 for *Basic*, *Expert*, and *Companion*, 12 for *Masters*, 14 for *Immortals*.

The differences between the Moldvay/Cook-Marsh editions and the Mentzer editions are entirely stylistic. Effectively they are both graduated and introductory versions of the *Dungeons & Dragons* game, but with an impressive degree of clarity and internal consistency that was lacking in the allegedly "advanced" counterpart. Ability bonuses and penalties had consistent values across all characteristics. Character classes were the human Clerics, Fighters, Magic-Users, and Thieves, and the demi-human Elves, Dwarves, and Halflings. The clarity and consistency does not necessarily imply

flexibility. Ability scores were still determined by a 3d6 roll with limited options for modifications. Level limits applied for to demi-humans; 8th level for Halflings, 10th level for the Elves (with fighting and magic-use abilities), and Twelfth level for Dwarves. Nor does it necessarily imply a greater sense of 'realism', although the 10-second structured combat round did seem more plausible than the one minute version in AD&D. As with previous editions of the game, the majority of text was taken up with spell and monster descriptions. Apart from formatting differences the most significant change between the two releases of the Basic and Expert sets is how the former in particular was written and organised for a younger audience.

The differentiation between the different boxed sets wasn't just the character levels, or the recommended minimum age. It was also the subject matter. Basic D&D was very much about adventures in dungeons. The DM's advice is explicitly about setting up an underground scenario, using dungeon level encounter tables, ensuring that dungeon plans are made, and stocking the various locations within. In the Expert set, aided by the classic scenario module, X1 The Isle of Dread, the DM's advice is orientated towards wilderness adventures, with like encounter tables, mapping overland lands, and with additional information on waterborne adventures and weather. In the Companion set, the characters are becoming extremely famous either as rulers of lands, or as travelling adventurers - a defining choice which the characters must make. Domain administration, political intrigues, and mass combat rules are introduced at this point, along with the exotic otherworldly planes of existence. New character classes are introduced (e.g., the Druid), and the scope of the wilderness extends to the continental.

In the Masters set, the characters have reached the stage of being world famous and as a result the scope of the campaign world is extended to the entire world. Interplanar travel is introduced as being more common, along with quests for immortality. As can be expected, the two Immortals sets deal with the power and politics of the gods among the spheres (time, matter, energy, entropy etc). In addition to subject matter, there was additional complexity and development in the rules. In higher levels the demi-human races no longer gained levels, but did acquire improvements in combat and saving throws; they tend to retreat into their clans and protect their artifacts. A variety of skills are introduced in the Companion set, and training and weapon mastery in the Masters set.

In this period the growth of Dungeons & Dragons and TSR was nothing short of phenomenal, having revenues of \$12.9 million in 1981, a payroll of 130, and breaking twenty million in sales by 1982 (Wall Street Journal, Jan 7, 1983). Games Workshop initially gained exclusive rights to distribute TSR products in the UK, which included some local productions, eventually with a TSR UK branch established in 1980. The community engaged in some community outreach with the the Role Playing Game Association also established in 1980. Additional roleplaying games were introduced to the market, such as Top Secret, Gangbusters, Star Frontiers, and the Endless Quest choose-your-own-adventure book series, and later Marvel Super Heroes, Indiana Jones, and Conan. The game was translated into foreign languages, including Danish, Finnish, German, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Norwegian, and Swedish.

The company structure underwent some changes as well. Melvin Blume's shares were transferred to Kevin Blume, leading to a board of directors consisting of Kevin (president of operations) and Brian Blume (president of creative affairs), and Gygax (company president and CEO). Product diversification increased, including some unexpected ventures - the Greenfield Needlewomen business perhaps being the most unusual. There were some impressive acquisitions (SPI, Amazing Stories). With the release of the Dragonlance books in 1984, TSR became the number one publisher of science fiction and fantasy in the U.S. Just as the company had split their chief product into multiple versions, the company itself split in 1983, the company was split into four companies, TSR, Inc. (the primary successor), TSR International, TSR Ventures and TSR Entertainment. The latter, headed by Gygax, became Dungeons & Dragons Entertainment Corporation, and attempted to license D&D products to television and film.

The End of the Gygax Era, 2nd ed AD&D, and Eventual Collapse

The diversification, reorganisation, and expansion of TSR would prove to be a poor decision. Actual revenues were well below forecasted values and the company continued to take on more staff. In need of additional liquidity, TSR took out a \$4 million loan from the American National Bank in Chicago. With Gygax concentrating on the hopeful acquisition of media rights, Mentzer took up more of the game development role. There was one particularly notable

success in Gygax's attempt in media licensing, and that was the 1983 Marvel entertainment production of the Dungeons & Dragons CBS Saturday morning cartoon, which apart from licensing also increased exposure of the game to a target audience. Nevertheless, it was insufficient. As the D&D fad-market disappeared TSR's creditors became more aggressive insisting on the addition of three outside directors to the board in 1984 (James Huber, Robert Kidon, and Wesley Sommers) with Richard Koenings becoming acting President and CEO, replacing Blume. This change however was short-lived; in March the following year Gygax and his son Ernie (who had a tiny percentage of the company), secured a controlling interest, and Gygax became President and Chief Executive Officer of TSR, Inc. During this tumultuous period, the company recorded a net loss of around \$1.5 million and some 75% of the staff were laid off, some of whom joined other game companies such as Pacesetter or Mayfair, or moved into the greener fields of video game development.

The day of October 22nd, 1985 was a special day for TSR Hobbies. The official business was to review the negotiations with the American National Bank and then to discuss royalty payments to authors. Brian Blume had, however, exercised his option for seven hundred shares, and as a result Gygax no longer had a controlling share of the company. When Gygax refused to resign, the TSR board terminated his role as President, CEO, and chair of TSR Inc, with the recently introduced Vice-President Lorraine Williams voted in as his replacement of President and CEO. Williams had previously agreed to purchase the entire Blume family stock in TSR, close to \$600 000, effectively making her the largest and controlling shareholder in the company. Williams was related to the Dille family who owned the rights to the original Buck Rogers comics and as a result, came with some notable financial backing. Gygax, who had always insisted that TSR should not be controlled by non-gamers, opposed Williams' new appointments, but to no avail. Whilst attempting legal action into 1986, the courts declared that the changes were all legal. In October 1986, Gygax resigned from all positions within the company selling his remaining stock to Williams to form New Infinity Productions.

Success brings attention, and when success is based around historical pagan religions of the past with a hint of simulated medieval occultism with an evident popularity among teenagers, some elements of society of going to raise unfounded fears and others whilst sections of the media are going to see opportunity for sensationalist coverage. Thus Dungeons & Dragons was targeted by some fundamentalist Christian groups for the promotion of paganism or devil worship, for nudity in images (e.g., the succubi), and a panic with the highly fictionalised novel and movie 'Mazes and Monsters' surrounding the disappearance of one player, James Dallas Egbert III. Whilst such controversies brought the game increasingly to the public eye, rather than engage in a strident defense the new regime at TSR choose instead to give them implicit acceptance of these criticisms in the production of Advanced Dungeons & Dragons 2nd edition. Devils and Demons were dropped in the Monster Manual, the half-orc was dropped a character race in the Players Handbook (not that it ever was particularly advantageous to select one), and assassins and monks were dropped as classes.

Whilst Advanced Dungeons & Dragons 2nd edition was not released until 1989, over two years from Gygax's departure, a team of developers started work on the game in 1987, the same year that the enduring Forgotten Realms setting was released. The following year saw a strange combination of releases with the Bullwinkle and Rocky RPG (complete with hand puppets) and the serious wargame, The Hunt for the Red October, based on the Tom Clancy novel. When AD&D 2e was released it came with a small avalanche of products; the Player's Handbook, the Dungeon Master's Guide, three volumes of the Monstrous Compendium, now in three-ring binder folders, two additional Complete Handbooks (Fighters and Thieves) and the Spelljammer campaign setting.

With Dave Cook responsible for design, the Players Handbook and Dungeon Masters Guide both came in three column justified sans-serif text with an excellent table of contents and index. There is very clear chapter notation on each page both in terms of title and with a special symbol. The artwork, with Jeff Easley and Larry Elmore being particularly notable contributors, was excellent in terms of technique, but lacked creativity and indeed, often reflected late 20th century styles in a fantasy context (especially with female characters). Indeed, this is a running theme throughout the second edition books; in terms of dull substance they were quite good, but they lack flair. Another matter which stood out is that whilst there was a very high level of backwards compatibility with first edition AD&D, the numerous

insights to RPG game design that came from numerous competitors over the previous decade was overwhelmingly ignored.

What was different between the two issues was relatively minimal. Documented ability scores went up to 25, like the Deities & Demigods of 1st edition. Major class groups and subclasses were more explicit, with the interesting albeit somewhat complex specialist wizards with the major school of magic and opposition schools, and bards established as a subclass of thief. A skill system of sorts with non-weapon proficiencies makes an appearance, derived from the Dungeoneer and Wilderness Survival Guides. There is very useful expansions to the time, movement, and perception sections, but the spell chapters engage in an impressive level of bloat, expanding to over one hundred pages in their own right, in a 256 page book. The second edition Players Handbook moves a great deal of useful player information from what was previously in the DMG to the PH, including ability generation, combat matrices, cleric turning tables, and saving throws.

Conversely, the Dungeon Masters Guide was a somewhat reduced tome. Level limits by race could now be found here, with optional rules for unlimited or at least expanded limits for non-humans. Some of these were still a little strange; Elves could advance further than Dwarves as Clerics, but still could not be Druids, for example. Another optional rule for generating new character classes is particularly prone to exploitation, and requires a particularly careful and firm DM. Significant attention is dedicated to alignment as a societal expression, worldview, and as a tool to aid roleplaying, although the treatment of Chaotic Neutral as a type of insanity was never popular. Experience is expanded beyond "killing monsters and taking their stuff" to include class-based experience and individual gains through ideas and roleplaying.

The repackaged Monster Manual was first released as MC1 Monstrous Compendium, consisting of 144 loose-leaf pages with 8 colour cardstock dividers and a three-hole binder. Each monster had a description and illustration on its own page, and each page was separate. The content consisted of a stat-block, descriptive content and a quarter page for each illustration, typically of fair competence but also usually lacking in creativity (an exception with humour being the Invisible Stalker). In comparison to the first edition Monster Manual, the new production included some extremely positive features. The game mentioned the typical climate and terrain that the creatures will be encountered in, in addition to their frequency (it was weird to include the latter, but not the former), the general form of social organisation, activity cycle, diet, and morale. These are all quite handy, recognising a greater elaboration in the treatment of monsters in the AD&D game and providing "at a glance" information of the societal and ecological information. This does not suggest that the AD&D engages in "monster equality" in terms of classes and abilities of course, at least not at this stage of its development, and nor does it suggest that the game wasn't still heavily biased towards treating "monsters" as primarily martial opponents to kill and take their stuff.

No less than fifteen different Monstrous Compendiums were released both of a general nature for AD&D campaigns, but also for specific campaign worlds, including Forgotten Realms, Dragonlance, Greyhawk, Kara-Tur, Spelljammer, Outer Planes, Ravenloft, and Al-Qadim along with four Annuals. The final result was well over a thousand different monsters and some of which really were of questionable quality. with an awful lot of creatures which fall into the "rare" or "very rare" frequency category. The Monstrous Manual was a hardback compilation of the first two Compendiums, containing over six hundred monsters in almost four hundred pages of text. Dragons receive some twenty pages worth. As per prior versions of this text, dragons are effectively colour-coded with the good metallic dragons, evil chromatic dragons, and the newly introduced neutral gem dragons. They're also become significantly tougher from 1st edition, with 11 plus hit dice now being typical, with commensurate improvements in other combat abilities.

A variety of additional supplements and a revision of the core rules were to follow. The Player's Options (Skills and Powers, Combat and Tactics, Spells and Magic, High Level Campaigns) along with the numerous kits available in the Complete Handbooks allowed for a significantly higher degree of customisation. A character point system was made available which would allow players to design their own subrace by purchasing abilities from other core races, or to develop their own classes in a similar fashion. Abilities scores were further differentiated allowing for more specific relations with tasks. Even the combat system was changed with 15 seconds melee rounds.

Another well-recognised feature of 2nd edition AD&D was the numerous supported campaign worlds from TSR. Original D&D had both Blackmoor and Greyhawk supplements, BECMI D&D had Mystara, and 1st edition AD&D saw Greyhawk in the new expanded edition, along with a Forgotten Realms from an original series of articles in *The Dragon*, and a supplement for Lankmar. Most importantly it had *Dragonlance*, with its significant collection of sequential scenarios and novels. However, the new edition of AD&D saw an expansion of the Forgotten Realms campaign setting, novels, computer games, and a number of sub-setting campaign sets including Kara-Tur, The Horde, and Maztica Campaign Set. In addition to these was an exceptional and strange elaboration of the planes of existence in the Planescape campaign setting and its numerous supplements. There was also the very well supported deadly and corrupting demi-plane campaign setting of Ravenloft, along with a further spinoff with the 19th century style Gothic Earth supplements, the connecting fantasy setting of Spelljammer, the harsh desert world of the Dark Sun setting, and the dragon PC-based setting of Council of Wyrms, and very late in the piece, the geopolitical and bloodline-based dynasties of the Birthright setting.

The phrase "late in the piece" is quite deliberate. By the end of 1995 TSR had fallen behind Games Workshop and Wizards of the Coast in sales revenue, who had respectively developed expensive table-top miniatures games and a popular collectible card game. Attempting to catch up, the company decided on a collectible dice game and to engage in a major expansion of their hardback novel production. It was also around this time that the company was also engaging in more aggressive demands on Internet usage, demanding the use of disclaimers, use of specific sites, and a policy statement that refused consumers publishing fan material with D&D statistics, in D&D gameworlds etc. The company was disparaging by the RPG community as "T\$R".

If only they were so fortunate. In a famous article by Ryan S. Dancey, then VP of Wizards of the Coast and Brand Manager, *Dungeons & Dragons* a telling description of TSR was provided. Sales of *Dragon Dice* started well, but did not catch on. The company was left with few cash reserves when a large number of returns of novels and dice, leading to a financial crisis. As the logistics company refused shipping without payment, the situation worsened. Dancey, visiting TSR comments "Inside the building, I found a dead company. In the halls that had produced the stuff of my childhood fantasies, and had fired my imagination and become unalterably intertwined with my own sense of self, I found echoes, empty desks, and the terrible depression of lost purpose." With the possible purpose of buying the company, Dancey was given access to the company records which showed a company that was "rotten at the core" in its "desperate arrangements" and "severance agreements between the company and departed executives which paid them extraordinary sums for their silence". Lorraine Williams sold the company to Wizards of the Coast in 1997 and the corporate offices in Lake Geneva were closed.

The Great Revival: WotC, 3rd edition, and OGL

For new owners, Wizards of the Coast, the most extraordinary aspect of TSR is that they had survived for so long with not just Byzantine management processes but with a dearth of market research. For most of its life, it had succeeded through a brilliant idea, latched a harness on the tiger and had gone on the ride. WotC promised to do things differently. As great as Planescape was, their market research said that it was too complex for most gamers. As great as Ravenloft was, it wasn't really in a position to compete against the White Wolf games which did supernatural themes with much more success. In a more generic sense, the customer base told WotC that the games that were being produced were "substandard, irrelevant, and broken ... boring or out of date, or simply uninteresting."

The strategic move of WotC transformed of D&D and indeed, the roleplaying hobby as a whole with a two-pronged strategy based on design and marketing. On the one hand, the game took up an extensive revision of the AD&D system, merging the disparate lines, and assembling an expert team of divergent design backgrounds (Skip Williams, Monte Cook, Jonathan Tweet). On the other side of the strategy was the publication of most of the material as a System Reference Document (SRD) and making that document available for use under a Open Game License (OGL) allowing commercial and non-commercial publishers supplements an intellectual property fee. Release of these products occurred shortly after the acquisition of WotC by the much larger toy and game company, Hasbro.

As with previous editions of *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*, the new third edition *Dungeons & Dragons* rules (the

"Advanced" prefix being dropped, as the BECMI D&D line had long been discontinued) consisted of a Players Handbook, Dungeon Masters Guide, and Monster Manual, all fairly lengthy hardback tomes, published on gloss paper with full-colour artwork throughout. Whilst the cover art of these new editions were raised to new levels of abstract boredom, the context-bound internal artwork showed good technique if even a further loss in imagination. More positively however was a general layout which showed good chapter titles clearly shown on each page, a good table of contents, and an excellent index. The faux grid lines on the text are more annoying than helpful and whilst the provision of a character generator CD was a nice idea, it was rather clunky and operating system specific.

Many of the design decisions were specifically orientated towards consistency, flexibility, and player enjoyment. The core character abilities remained in place, but with a consistent modifier across all and without a cap at 25. The unpopular restrictions of race and class combinations were removed, although a "favoured class" mechanic was introduced for the various races. All classes had the same experience level scale, with saving throws based only on Fortitude, Will, or Reflexes. Multiclassing was allowed with minimal restrictions at best. The class and subclass system was removed with all classes considered relatively independent of each other; Sorcerer, Wizard, Bard, Rogue, Cleric, Druid, Monk, Ranger, Fighter, Paladin, and Barbarian. The new Sorcerer class was a Charisma-based spell-caster, and the Thief was renamed as a Rogue.

Alignment remained in the dual-axes approach and Chaotic Neutral lost the taint of representing madness. Most importantly however, for the first time, an almost entirely consistent core mechanic was introduced, built on a d20 high roll, against a target number. Used in both abilities, skills, basic attacks, and saving throws, this would become a system that would have it's own namesake (the d20 system) and a mechanic that would remain in place in future editions.

With roughly fifty skills and specialisations, there was a definite shift in the focus of the game.

The game was still very much a combat and spells engine, but at least now it was not the entire possible focus. Skills were acquired through points which varied according to class and were limited through a distinction between class and cross-class skill levels. Each were tied to a key ability, and were defined whether they could be used in an untrained state. Sample difficulty challenges (DCs) were provided along with skill-specific modifications. As a tangent to the skills, Feats, provided various yes/no abilities, such as general proficiencies in various weapon types, skill group bonuses, the ability to create various magic items, etc. To further enhance character ability, a more extensive equipment list was provided in the Players Handbook with variation on weapon damage based on the size of the character rather than their target.

Armour now added as a component to a high Armour Class target number, rather than the old THAC0 system, and importantly varies against attack types. For example, a "touch" based attack would not be affected by a character's armour contribution to Armour Class, whereas if an opponent is caught "flat footed" any Dexterity bonuses will not apply. Characters that move into a threatened square (the system speaks in terms as if a combat grid is assumed, but it not entirely necessary) generate an attack of opportunity that can occur outside of the normal initiative sequence which, incidentally, is based on a d20 individual roll and remains in place for the length of an encounter. Actions are generally defined as Standard, Move, Full-Round, and Free.

Finally, for the Players Handbook, there is an extensive spell system with characters still limited to a number of spell per day, including so-called "0 level spells". Priest spell spheres were removed from the game, however domain spells were introduced allowing clerics bonus spells based on their deity's domain influences, as well as the ability to swap out prepared spells for curative spells. In other respects the classic use of a level-based differences with verbal, somatic, and material components remains, as does variable spell casting times, duration, and distance, and availability of saving throws.

Whilst extensive in size, the new Dungeon Masters Guide was more oriented towards supplementary and advisory material, such as the helpful notes on game session preparation and conduct, pacing, adjudication of the rules and, in places (e.g., combat, campaign power settings and events, planar adventures) expansions. Experience points have a direct relationship between the challenge being faced (typically a monster, but also traps) and the level of the character

with treasure too being based on "Encounter Level". For wilderness adventures, terrain types are provided alongside appropriate encounter tables, with notes and random tables provided for dungeon and urban adventures as well.

The treatment of NPCs in the third edition DMG was particularly impressive. The usual collection of hirelings was, of course, available at varying rates. But also introduced were special non-adventuring NPC classes, the Adept (a semi-spell caster), the Aristocrat, the Commoner, the Expert, and the Warrior. Whilst hardly the sort of classes that the deeply simulationist fantasy-medieval gamer would be over-awed with it was certainly the first tentative steps in providing more than just adventurers in a character class system. An extensive list of sample adventurer class characters according from levels 1st to 20th along with assumed ability scores and expected equipment was also provided which proved very handy in various random encounters.

Prestige classes are also included in the DMG. These are typically more powerful than the standard classes on a level-by-level basis with specialist abilities but also with prerequisites. For example the assassin makes a return with the requirements of an evil alignment, 4 ranks in Disguise, 8 ranks in Move Silently, 8 ranks in Hide, and a 'first assassination'. Significant notes are also provided on familiars and other animal companions, before a very large section on magic items which notably have a greater degree of variation and significantly more sensible construction rules than what existed in previous editions.

The changes in the Monster Manual were no less significant. Finally, D&D had "monster equality" with each creature no longer represented as a set of combat-only characteristics, but provided with a full set of statistics, along with their environment, social organisation, and a level enhancement procedure. Certainly combat statistics were a big feature; this is after all, both D&D and a Monster Manual, but sufficient attention was provided to other creature characteristics. In many ways, it was not dissimilar to the 2nd edition treatment of "monsters" but with statistically elaboration. Shorter chapters and descriptions were also provided for mundane animals, various giant insectoid vermin, and finally an extensive content on creating new monsters.

It can be stated quite fairly that the 3rd edition Dungeons & Dragons was an absolute necessity for the game. It simply wasn't possible to continue with the creaky and inconsistent system as competitors moved onwards and upwards with more innovative and consistent designs. This was a problem from even the earliest days of AD&D, and certainly there were high hopes that the second edition would at least cover some of these issues, but it was not to be. Co-designer in the third edition, Jonathon Tweet, has mentioned how critically important RuneQuest was to many of the design decisions and certainly in many ways the sense of consistency in that game carried over with the style that is associated with D&D.

Nevertheless, the rules are quite crunchy with crunch comes the increased possibility of error. A few years later (2003), WotC saw the need to release a revised edition of the game, as D&D3.5. Most of these were sensible tweaks that evened out the game a bit and an update booklet was also made available (although many chose to purchase another set of hardbacks). Barbarians received improved class features, Bards more skill points and music abilities, Druids were given nature's ally spells in place of prepared spells. Rangers were given more skill points and were given the option of being dual-weapon specialists or archery specialists. The most significant change was to the Monk which had numerous class features altered. There was new feats and spells and a range of changes to existing feats spells, a merging or renaming of some skills, and modification to the acquisition of feats and skills for monsters.

In addition to the new rules, the marketing strategy of WotC was based on the use of a System Reference Document (SRD) and an Open Game License (OGL). The SRD was licensed under the OGL and included the core rules and mechanics for a range of games that came under the d20 heading and was distributed freely as a set of Rich Text Format documents. This included Dungeons & Dragons of course, but also the d20 System, d20 Modern, and d20 Future. It was also the basis for games outside of WotC such as Mutants & Masterminds. Various setting elements however (such as Greyhawk references) were taken out of the SRD. Complementing the SRD, the OGL copyright allows game developers to grant permission to modify, copy, and redistribute some of the content with share-alike features. The OGL distinguishes between material which is open content, and that which is product identity, which is content kept under normal copyright.

Whilst the SRD and OGL combination led to an explosion of new products by various companies of varying quality. An additional license, the d20 System Trademark License (D20STL) was also introduced which required a clear statement that that required the core books from Wizards of the Coast for use. It also required "community standards of decency" following the attempted publication of the d20 Book of Erotic Fantasy by The Valar Project; it was subsequently published without the d20 System trademark under the OGL. All D20STL products also had to use the OGL to make use of d20 System open content, but use of the OGL did not require the D20STL. Unlike the OGL, D20STL was revocable and indeed, this happened with the release of 4th edition D&D which had its own and much more limited SRD in terms of Open Content. Fourth edition D&D effectively killed the D20 product range, but the OGL producers continued on.

A New Game? Fourth Edition

In August 2007, a relatively brief time later in the world of D&D editions, an announcement was made that a new edition was in the works, which was released the following year. Of note was the new Game System License (GSL), significantly more restrictive than the OGL, and with a much reduced SRD. The 3.x SRD provided complete information about races, classes, mechanics, spells, etc, the 4th edition SRD provided only concepts and tables, making it very difficult to design a game from the SRD alone. The license also includes the clauses that state that it can be updated by Wizards of the Coast and updates affect all licensees and in case of litigation the licensees must pay the legal costs of Wizards of the Coast. The combination of these two components is perhaps indicative of the dearth of material published under 4th Edition. Certainly, WotC and Hasbro had a serious reconsideration of the idea of releasing most of the mechanics of their games as effectively a free and open-source document.

As with other editions the production quality of production of 4th edition was very high; hardback books with stitched binding, gloss paper and artwork displaying good technique (and Moldvay/Cook reminiscent cover art) are quite notable with 800 pages of material across the three books, written by James Wyatt primarily with Mike Mearls and Stephen Schubert also contributing. Each book comes with a solid table of contents and index. In terms of content, the new edition was much more than a substantial revision as third was from second. Indeed many argued that it was in fact a new game entirely. Whilst this is perhaps over-stating the case it did seem to have problems with backwards compatibility.

The core mechanic remained the same; roll d20, add modifiers and beat the target number ("Difficulty Class"). Conventions of simple rules with many exceptions, specific beats general, and always round down were established. Standard races were offered (Dwarves, Elves, Half-Elves, Halflings, humans), plus a couple of new additions including the Dragonborn ("proud, honor-bound draconic humanoids"), the Eladrin ("graceful, magical race born of the Feywild"), and Tieflings ("descended from ancient humans who bargained with infernal powers"). The different races gain different ability bonuses, skill bonuses and racial powers all of which are positive (there is no negative modifiers for Halfling strength, for example).

Available character classes include Cleric, Fighter, Paladin, Ranger, Rogue, Warlock, Warlord and Wizard. In addition these classes have combat roles namely Controller (e.g., wizard), Defender (e.g., fighter), Leader (e.g., Cleric) and Striker (e.g., Rogue). Ability scores are the standard D&D version consisting of Strength, Constitution, Dexterity, Intelligence, Wisdom and Charisma with a + or - 1 modifier for every two points above or below 10-11. Alignment was been cut down from the dual axes to a mere five; Lawful Good, Good, Unaligned, Evil, Chaotic Evil. Skills have been reduced to a mere 17 in number and the 5% increments of third edition and earlier has been abolished in favour of a "trained? or ?untrained" status, the former giving characters a +5 bonus to any skill checks. There are roughly one hundred and fifty Feats, differentiated by Heroic, Paragon and Epic tiers, are described with a few lines each with over 90% having a strong combat orientation.

Every power, skill or special ability in the game is keyed to an ability score which all use the core mechanic. Usually the Difficulty Class is against a static number. Attack rolls, skill checks and ability checks all include half the level of the character as a bonus. All classes require the same number of experience points per level and gain the same number of feats, powers and other bonuses. A new level is gained every ten encounters, on average, and every encounter or

quest provides experience point (XP) rewards. At 11th or 21st levels characters must choose between taking a Paragon path or an Epic destiny as appropriate and eventually immortality at 30th level and the completion of the campaign's final Destiny Quest. These levels are considered break-points in character capacity and the benefits they accrue adds to this claim.

Powers are extremely important to the new edition. One of the widespread of these powers is "healing surges". Characters start with significantly more hit points than previously editions of the game (for example, a first level human fighter with 13 CON with begin with 28 hit points and gain an additional 6 per level. In addition a character may spend a "healing surge", one quarter of a character's maximum hit points, as a standard action, once per encounter, plus a number per day depending on the class; a fighter received 9 + CON modifier. Powers take up an enormous section of the Player's Handbook, with a small selection per class, per level and distinguished between "at will", "per encounter" and "daily". Most of the powers are combat abilities with a modicum of "utility powers".

The combat system follows a familiar account of determine surprise, roll for initiative take turns. Attacks are roll high, achieve Armour Class (or other defense as appropriate) plus as a target number and apply damage with a fair bit on what is described as combat effects (e.g., falling, pushing and shoving etc). One of the more interesting new elements is the status of "bloodied", when a character is at half or less hit points certain powers work differently. Finally, at the end of the book, is a chapter on Rituals which explains complex magical ceremonies, almost entirely non-combat utility magics such as summoning animal messengers, discern lies, creating magic feasts, curing disease, raising the dead, water walk, breathe water and so forth.

The Dungeon Master's Guide launches right in with sensible "how to be a DM and run a game" advice, with tips on preparation and time expectations, narration, pacing, and improvisation, and ending the game along the use game tools such as props, and in-game tools such as passive skill tests. In 4th edition style, the DMG defines the game as "Stripped to the very basics, the D&D game is a series of encounters" and an adventure is defined "just a series of encounters". There is significant descriptive detail in running and building (challenging but balanced) combat encounters, which apparently includes disease. Like the previous edition's Challenge Rating, D&D 4th edition has well-defined target XP totals to distribute to each encounter with a number of sample templates Skill challenges are defined the number of success required - anything less than four does not constitute a challenge.

The notable final chapter has the sample scenario "Fallcrest", which is well described, it makes sense, and it is well positioned for a story. Major locations are appropriately described, and a couple of colourful NPCs are mentioned along with stats for the one the PCs are most likely to have a physical disagreement, two they may very well take along on an adventure into the wilds and one whom they'll may have some social (and eventual physical) conflict with. The wilds are presented with a simple but well-designed regional map, with several locations of adventuring potential all of which receive some description. Significant notes are given on how to involved the players in the region (a little lengthy and out of place), before moving into the meaty section of Kobold Hall which, apart from being a community of kobolds, has a number of other adventure hooks. The dungeon itself is classic D&D with all the design improbabilities that causes those with architectural knowledge to groan at, but is otherwise interesting and challenging and the story does come with a special surprise at the end as well.

Finally, the 4th edition Monster Manual is simply a almost three-hundred page compendium of monsters arranged alphabetically (almost 150 in total) with a few pages for racial traits, a glossary and monsters by level. The descriptions themselves however, are mostly stat blocs and descriptions of how the creatures engage in fighting, along with an assigned combat-orientated 'role', although credit is given for continuing the tradition started in third edition of giving monsters a full range of characteristics, skills, alignment and powers. Sometimes there is a little bit of ecological or historical data, but nothing like what the Monstrous Compendium of Advanced Dungeons & Dragons, second edition, was famous for.

Fourth edition Dungeons & Dragons is the most significant departure from previous editions of the game to date, although the lineage remains clear. The scope of the text is also narrow, being almost entirely about combat which is surprising given the new directions the game was heading in second edition AD&D, the D&D Rules Compendium and

third edition D&D. For players who like the incremental improvements to a variety of skills, the internal and social conflicts of a two-dimensional alignment schema and such elements there will not be much joy in this new edition of the game. The new edition has incorporated the design considerations from various collectable card games, unit-based fantasy board-games and, as often mentioned, online fantasy combat roleplaying games.

Concluding Remarks

For many gamers the changes between 3rd and 4th editions of Dungeons & Dragons were far too great and a great number followed the path (see what I did there?) to Pazio's publication which stayed more closely connected to the 3.x series and the Open Gaming License. Their own game, Pathfinder, for many months has been more popular than Dungeons & Dragons 4th edition. As should be clear, the new edition of the game is very much an attempt to bring a number of these strays (indeed, perhaps a majority-sized flock) back into the fold. Interestingly whilst 5th edition has released a basic set as a free (as in price) downloadable document, "there does not exist a public license that grants you the right to create contents based on D&D 5e, whether commercial or not". How this translates in competition with the open gaming movement is yet to be seen. In concluding, mention must also be made of the Old School Revival movement which takes up interest in older editions of Dungeons & Dragons and the publication of derived works from those games.

Dungeons & Dragons has gone a strange journey and yet has survived and in doing so provided the foundations of an entire hobby. Whilst it has had its share of corporate shenanigans, and a history out of wargaming which provided significant design continuity challenges, it has nevertheless sparked the imaginations of millions whilst at the same time often stumbling through obstacles. It remains with us, and in the eye of the general public, remains synonymous with table-top roleplaying games in general. It has profoundly influenced the development of computer adventure games as well with canonical notions such as "level" being common in a gamist creative agenda. There can be no doubt that the game will continue far into the future with a many more editions and through generations to come.

Special mention goes to Lawrence Schick's "Heroic Worlds", Prometheus Books, 1991 and Jon Peterson's, "Playing at the World", Unreason Press, 2012 in the construction of this article.

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