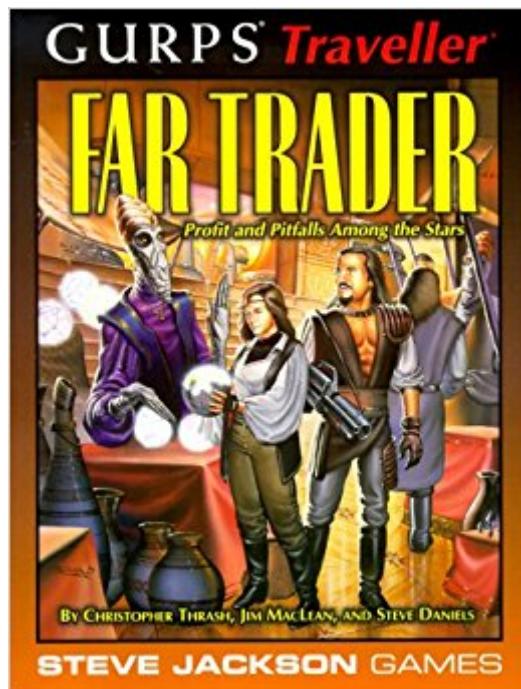


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GURPS Traveller: Far Trader



Synopsis

-- A complete sourcebook for the popular "independent trader" campaign style.-- Includes deck plans for two hardworking merchant ships.-- Chapter 2 is an economics textbook in disguise...and it's fun!This book is intended for use with GURPS Traveller, but can be used as a sourcebook for any science fiction roleplaying game.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

An excellent resource for modelling interstellar trade for any RPG. It tackles various economic and freight related issues, and all of these can be adapted as needed for different settings. Perfect for GMs and players who want more numbers and nuts and bolts to their trading.

One of the archetypal Traveller activities is trading, and if that's your thing, this book has you covered! As you would expect from Steve Jackson Games, this sourcebook is packed full of great info and thought-provoking ideas. Every Traveller GM should have this book.

Good resource for any sci-fi game.

The so called "Big Picture" introduction (Chapter 1) is a disaster. As much as it pains me to say, the guy who wrote this must have a very limited understanding of economics. Now, I'm just gonna pick the most ludicrous assumptions with averse effect on roleplaying trade here:1) First, the author's assertion (page 9) of "Commercial banks" keeping reserves in Imperial Credits or "precious metals"

is embarrassing. Anyone who has been involved in any international trade knows that international transactions will revolve around the passing of documents of title (bills of lading). While loading the cargo, the shipper will issue a bill of lading to the charterer (probably the exporter), who will pass it to his bank. The bank will have a lien in this bill of lading (not in a lump of gold locked up in a safe), and you cannot collect the delivery without this bill of lading (if handing over it, the shipper would be strictly liable for any loss suffered by the owner of the bill of lading). The intended receiver of the goods (probably the importer) must accordingly first obtain the bill of lading from the financer. In order to do so, the receiver either pays the agreed upon price up front or, more likely, supply a corresponding bond (a letter of credit) issued by his own local bank. Already now, the bills of lading are moving towards the encrypted electronic receipts we could expect in a future Imperium rather than the old paper documents. Anywho... that's the financial transactions involved in a deal when trade= transport of goods. Not a reserve in "precious metals". You're welcome.2) Secondly, the author appears confused as to the role of the Imperium in interstellar trade agreements. Seeing as the Empire is supposed to only rule the space between the worlds, it would seem anathema to assume a federal common market allowing not only tariffs (of 1-5%) but even higher barriers for trade and for unilateral trade agreements with non-Empire worlds (page 5). I would personally model the Imperium on the EU, assigning the MoC an active role in preserving the free movement of goods (if not capital, services and people) within the Imperium. That would remove the stupid discussion on tariffs on transported goods (while the importing and exporting jurisdictions would still need to exchange VAT information). Also, we should frankly assume that the Empire would have a monopoly on negotiating trade agreements (incl import tariffs and other terms) on behalf of its member worlds with non-Empire jurisdictions (the Vargr or the Zhodani, etc).3) Thirdly, as for the Imperial Credit; "people use the Credit because it's by far the most convenient way to conduct interstellar trade"!? Seriously? Apparently the author doesn't understand the function of a currency and exchange mechanism. To equate the role of a currency with the convenience of "people" (tourists grabbing a pint at a starport stop-over between flights?) and not its function in interstellar trade between commercial entities is plain simplistic. Buyers and sellers of goods will agree terms of payments, and these companies will then secure their respective exchange rates at various financial institutions. The Credit may or may not be part of this corporate financing, but more likely, the contracting parties will deal in the local currency of either the exporting or importing market, and then either party may insure its respective stake in falling/rising exchange rates. As evidenced by the failure of the Euro, a common currency would require a common fiscal policy, and would hardly be practical in a galaxy spanning Empire. Accordingly, I don't believe the Traveller Imperium could ever

have its own consumer currency ("money"). Despite having much more federal authority than the Iridium Throne, not even the EU expect all its member countries to exclusively abide by the Euro (we still have the British pound sterling and the Danish Krona, for instance), and its companies may conduct business in whatever currency they please. It's highly likely, however, that there would be an Imperial Bond (a "Special Drawing Right", for those familiar with Hague-Visby rules in international maritime trade). That Imperial Bond (issued by an Imperial Central Bank, independent from the MoC) may well be referred to as a "Credit". But to suggest that there would be "Credit notes minted" (page 9) is silly, and does not come close to reflect the function of a currency or the role of a Central Bank. From a roleplaying point of view, we could perhaps fall back upon a simplified Credit system to calculate profits and to readily transfer purchasing power between jurisdictions, but let's not delude ourselves as to the role of the MoC here.⁴⁾ Fourth, the so called "free trade" that the author envisions is stupid. A 1- 5% tariffs "to finance the planetary navy"? Tariffs don't finance anything; they protect the local industry from imports, as imports reduce the taxation of local produce. It would be the local beneficiaries of imports that would pay taxes to finance whatever, but let's not forget that the safety provided by "the local navy" is equally important to further the exports of the local economies. Presumably a space port could apply fees for the use of its facilities and to keep space lanes free of obstacles (pirates and meteorites). More likely, the local authorities would use income generated from the importing businesses to subsidize such expenditures rather than impose the cost on shipping companies. In roleplaying terms, the players may have to pay local sales taxes, but for imports from another member world of the Imperium, there ought not be any tariff. In addition, the author also seems lost as to the correlation between interest rates and investments (low interest rates fuel investments in shares, commodities and consumer goods!), and also assigns an unlikely and pointless bureaucratic role to the Ministry of Commerce in approving and regulating incorporated businesses. However, despite these shortcomings in the purported economic background, the actual rules mechanics (Chapter 2 onwards) are still playable. (Although I really can't see why the author should persist in mote mercantilist discussions on trade imbalances, especially as he has already assumed that all transactions are made in the uniform Credits currency anyway.)

The first times I have watched Firefly I knew what I was watching. I was watching Far Trader. One of the favorite settings in a Traveller campaign is as a the crew of a small wandering trader slipping through the tangled web of the Imperial bureaucracy and the Megacorporations to scrape a living along the frontiers. You are small but you are free, and the universe is yours so long as your wits

and good fortune allow. Far Trader naturally gives a lot of information on running such a campaign. But it also tells of the general nature of Intersteller Trade. The book is quite meaty and uses information based on the details of the real-life distribution industry. When I was tour-guide at Oregon Maritime Museum, I was able to use tidbits I had learned from far-trader to help give information to the tourists. Which shows how "realistic" it was. Those who are not detailmongers like me, might find this book annoying. Even then, there is toward the end a relief from that with advice on how to conduct a campaign. If you like to imagine yourself a bold enterpreneur with a keen wit then this is a book for you. The stars are free and the universe belongs to you. But watch out. For as the book warns you: "Cutthroat competition is not just a colorful catch phrase".

When I first got hold of this book, I expected something similar to the original "Merchant Prince", a few essays on trade, enhanced character generation, a few ship listings and maybe an additional trade table or two for the buying and selling of cargo....what a difference 15+ years can make! Boy, was I surprised when I opened the covers of "Far Trader" and started to read. Detailed essays on finance and trade in the Imperium, an incredibly detailed - almost realistic - economic and trade system, and much more besides. The detail was somewhat overwhelming at first, and somewhat insulted my minimalist sensibilities as a twenty year traveller veteran. I want to play a merchant! I exclaimed, not read a book on economics! But then I started to look at the material closely - and it **is** good. The authors have started with the initial premise that interstellar trade **is** both viable and necessary and then built a "pseudo-realistic" trading and economic system on top of it. It's elegant, neat and eminently playable. All the usual stuff is there of course, starship plans, character templates for GURPS and a host of adventure seeds. Production values are fabulous, and the books have a nifty "sidebar" format where a wealth of additional information is presented. I'm going to give it 5 stars, it's a great piece of work - I liked it, but I can imagine that it won't be for all tastes. It's not really a book you can "dip into" and start using with a cursory read - if you are going to have successful merchant characters you'll need to read and absorb a fair portion of this book. I'm afraid that the 40 page vignette books of the classic traveller period are long gone, replaced with detail, detail, detail. But with such quality of content, and production values like these I for one won't particularly mourn their passing.

Uh, wrong bio for Daniels, and I'm pretty sure if Tom Peters were a co-authors this book would be an actual business book and not a science-fiction business.

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