

DESIGN DOC

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Project 4 RPG

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DESIGN INTENT

So I can assure you, my design goals were pure. However, the actual execution of such things was mediocre at best. My goal was going for making the system feel the way I wanted it to. I wanted it to be an experience full of wonder and mischief and silly school things. I also wanted to flesh out the world a lot and give it a consistent feel. Sam has quite a lot of feedback for me regarding this, and it was definitely one of the things I wanted to focus on. I wanted the world and the system to both feel magical, and for people to enjoy immersing themselves in the space I give them, but I believe I fell drastically short of that. After doing playtests and then dumping some forty odd hours into this, I got nowhere near the state I wanted this RPG to be in, but I did make a lot of progress and learned tons about my system.

RULES TEST

For the first playtest, I was originally just gonna quickly go through the rules and make some characters with Daniel. He's a big RPG guys and likes to learn systems inside and out, so I thought he'd be perfect for this task, and he was. However, what I thought would be a quick two hour ordeal quickly turned into five hours of tearing my system apart. We covered the entire system, and his biggest concerns were how spell casting works. The other big thing I covered with him was my terrible economy system and how I can actually make one that works.

HIGH PRIORITY CHANGES

These were the ones I put at the top of the list and finished by the deadline.

- I need to explain the bond channel better, particularly the re-bonding after death.
- There were a few problems with spell casting; there was a need for clarification of what the role of channel bonuses was and how exactly magic sources worked. I made sure to clarify the purpose of these things in the character creation section and reinforced it in spellcasting.

- He noticed the spell casting section was only half a page, even though it's the thing the RPG is about. So I expanded it a bit and added an example. I would do more if I could, but the time has come.
- The spells needed to come sooner so I moved them up in the rulebook since they're more of a focus than other things. I also moved combat down to the back.
- Fix the background character creation system bit. I made it a little less dumb and removed some extraneous features and highlighted the fact that disabilities with is in stats is a thing.
- I defined the line of sentience in reference to mystic spells and necromancy spells. Why it says person vs creature and what that really means.
- I defined the basic concept of spells a lot better.
- I also implemented an impossibility check thing for non-combat spells. I spent a long time trying to figure out the math. But I'd really need to test it to see how it felt to different kinds of players.

FUTURE CHANGES

These were changes that are still important, but I will be putting in later.

- Passive voice in a few sections needs to be made more commanding. There are a few pleases and maybes.
- I need to explain how spells are gained more explicitly. It's really quite vague and only mentioned in one place.
- I need to explain house point better. How are they gained? How much are they really worth? How many do you start with?
- Do the ways you get house points get harder and more rewarding as you go along and level up? What is the GM's ideal rate to dispense house points?
- I need to make some of the items better. They're kind of jumbled and some are just useless.
- There needs to be more damage spells for combat? Daniel seems to think so, but I'm not sure if that's something I really want.
- I need to define what casting against allies and friendlies looks like.

PLAY TEST

For this second playtest, I just had players go through make some characters, and run a quick session. I played with Daniel, Bryan, and my roommate Brendan. However, while this group was easy to get together and I managed to get them together pretty early on, they might have been bad choices for actually testing. I wanted to see if, in general my system could work. However, they are rather competitive, gamist players, so I got a lot of extraneous data that really hammered into my spell system and combat system but not

much else. The feel I was going for with the system was sort of freeform narrativist, with lots of room for cool stories and descriptions, but still accessible to gamists. However, with this playtest I realized I wasn't hitting either of those things. But I learned a LOT about my magic system and found so many ways to make it better.

HIGH PRIORITY CHANGES

These were the ones I put at the top of the list and finished by the deadline.

- Brendan really threw a wrench into my spells. He was like I'll just dump manipulation magic and max my strength. And without explicit limits on manipulation magic, he could out do ANYTHING anyone threw at him. To fix this I totally added explicit directions for manipulation magic.
- Of course this means Bryan's strength based character was going to get butts. And then we spent the next two hours trying to PvP without entering combat, and just arguing over spell semantics. It was a nightmare. The first thing that needed to be defined in this situation was how long it takes to cast a spell. Which I've defined as five seconds.
- Once that was decided, we had to figure out the move rates for spell types. How fast is moving vs thrusting an object? Etc. I eventually decided that it should be based on how good you are at that school of magic. And that thrust would be faster than throw which are faster than move.

FUTURE CHANGES

These were changes that are still important, but I will be putting in later.

- Healing magic was totally nebulous to them, and no one really knew how it worked. I wanted to fix it, but I only got halfway through the "fix spells" category of what I had to fix. So yeah, in the future.
- Bryan had a lot of trouble because he was an elementalist fighting a manipulationist, meaning they were skilled very similarly, but Bryan on had elements at his disposal. He also felt that elementalists needed more differentiation and to feel stronger. I feel that the strength came from how he built his character, and from just manly aggression towards his fellow player.
- Wow! There's no languages! Guess what I don't have time for!
- There aren't any summoning creatures rules. There aren't any creature rules in general. I would have to make an entire creature maker section. Which is way out of scope at this point.
- Attacks of opportunity? Not today.
- I do need to put in blast radius rules though. Size increment rules in general, I knew I was forgetting something.

- And the last thing that was just totally innocuous: strength needs an inherent advantage. Dex has initiative and movement, int has passing classes, cha has talking to people and being perceptive, and then strength. I feel like strength and breaking stuff makes sense, but whatever. I'll talk to more gamists about it?

WHAT WENT IN!

Here's an overview of my personal notes on what made it in to the submission RPG.

- how does the dissolution work
- dissolution functionality
- magic in the dissolution
- magic outside the dissolution
- change character background system
- include learning magic source (or explain better)
- explain that channels cannot be used unless known (or receive penalty)
- somehow differentiate schools and channels
- magical creatures today (in and out of the dissolution)
- magical creatures interactions with mages
- magical creatures interactions in past/with non-mages
- explain familiars
- degrees of success actions
- stat action examples
- non-offensive starts to combat (defense etc.)
- explain even larger weapons (how to expand or shrink the weapon system)
- bond channel - explain rebonding after death
- region based combat???
- Mood opening 6
- magic school flavor 9
- Explain background stuff in character creation better
- Explain risks of taking 1s in each stat-----
- historical figures and schools of thought
- modern sects of history schools of thought
- interactions between modern sects 3
- CHANNEL BONUUSES???
- Get rid of in spell casting, or detail in character creation
- define channel penalty
- Explain spells and casting sooner

- move spells up (or make spell book)
- define casting time for spells
- 1 spell per 5 seconds
- move rate - 1/2 school (minimum 1)
- thrust rate = 2x school
- throw rate = school
- fix all instance of channel and magic source bonuses
- Expand casting spells
- Spells - mysticism - define line between person and creature (sentience)
- limit manipulation spells (one aspect per spell or something)

WHAT DIDN'T MAKE IT ☹️

My personal notes on what didn't actually make it into this version, but what I want add eventually.

- outline spell outcomes
- define spells
- define overcoming adversities in spell casting (+4 each level)
- make elementals unique?
- anti-magic stuff
- consider removing school level bonuses from lineages
- more damage spells (define damage of spells)
- explain healing? ----- 10
- explain death in mage society
- life in the dissolution-----
- explain sanity (damage = level of spell)
- explain levels vs years
- explain how you learn spells from classes
- Explain how spells are learned/gained
- Explain how many spells you have at anytime-----
- summoning creatures rules
- explain non-human enemies
- make a monster maker for GMs-----
- class registration sheets
- courses completed on character sheet
- track spells learned on character sheets
- move fortitude and willpower above stats

- Name and player details together?
- change levels and years on character sheet
- Name of rpg on character sheet
- order spell on character sheet the same as in book
- Expands Background on character sheet-----
- currency outside the school
- Econ - define that jobs get more risky with higher rewards, in later levels
- starting house points/items
- Define actual house point worth
- Explain how to get points
- Explain to GM how to give out points
- Explain to GM how many point to apply and when-----
- go through and fix notes in book
- find inherent advantage to strength
- explain ways to make modifiers
- make house ring better for summer