Designers are doing it for themselves: Self-publishing and the search for enlightenment

Brian Train
GUWS presentation
December 8, 2020

Once over lightly….

- You can self-publish… but why?

- You can self-publish… but what?

- You can self-publish… but how?

- Slides: https://brtrain.wordpress.com/2020/12/06/postguws

I am Brian Train, defiler of paper

- Wargame player since about 1979, designer since about 1990.

- Published games with BTR Games, Compass Games, Decision Games, Fiery Dragon Productions, Flying Pig Games, GMT Games, Hollandspiele, Lock n' Load, Microgame Design Group, Modern Combat Studies Group, Nestorgames, One Small Step Games, Schutze Games, Simulations Workshop, Strategy Gaming Society, Steambubble Graphics, and Tiny Battle Publishing.

- My special interests in game design are irregular warfare, "pol-mil" games, and asymmetric games generally.

Black-Boxing Syndrome (Dunnigan)

"If you can play them, you can design them." (also Dunnigan)
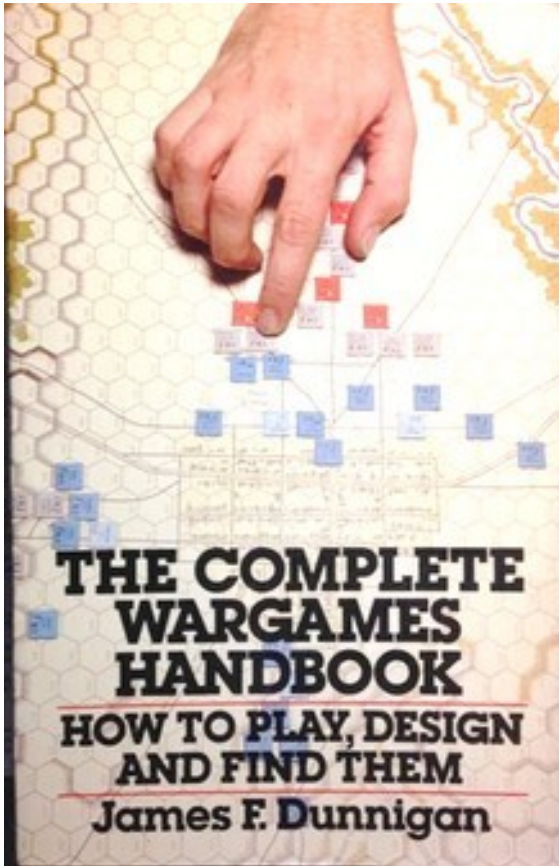
Two Rules:

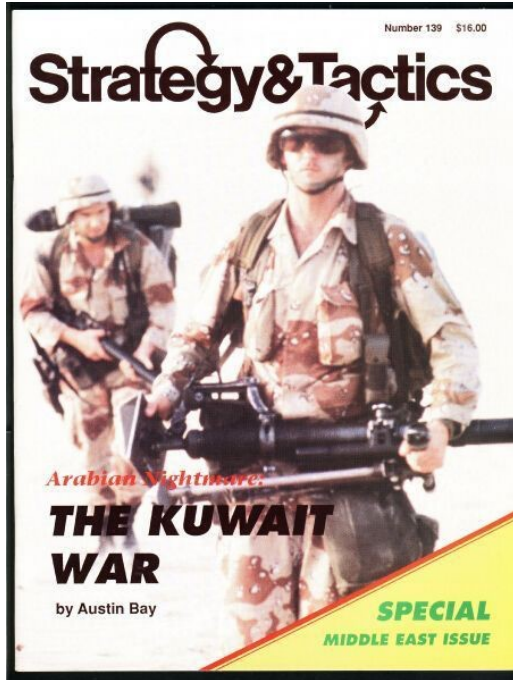- Keep it simple.
- Plagiarize.

Ten Points for Attention:

1. Concept development
2. Research
3. Integration
4. Create prototype
5. First draft of rules
6. Game development
7. Blind testing
8. Editing
9. Production
10. Feedback

http://www.professionalwargaming.co.uk/Complete-Wargames-Handbook-Dunnigan.pdf

Self-publishing

- ...is how I got started, and you can too
- Why do this at all?
  - itchy brain
  - "I can do better than that"
  - presentation of research/ desire to inform others

Game as journalism

Intellectual Property:
rights and responsibilities

- You have the moral and legal right to assert yourself as the Creator of an original work.

- As Creator, you can set the conditions under which your work can be used.

- It can get complicated:
https://www.americanbar.org/groups/intellectual_property_law/publications/landslide/2014-15/march-april/not-playing-around-board-games-intellectual-property-law/

- Or not: http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/

- Few things in life are truly original. Acknowledge your creative debts and inspirations.

Self-publishing methods

Desk Top Published

Print and Play

Digital Self-published

Print on Demand
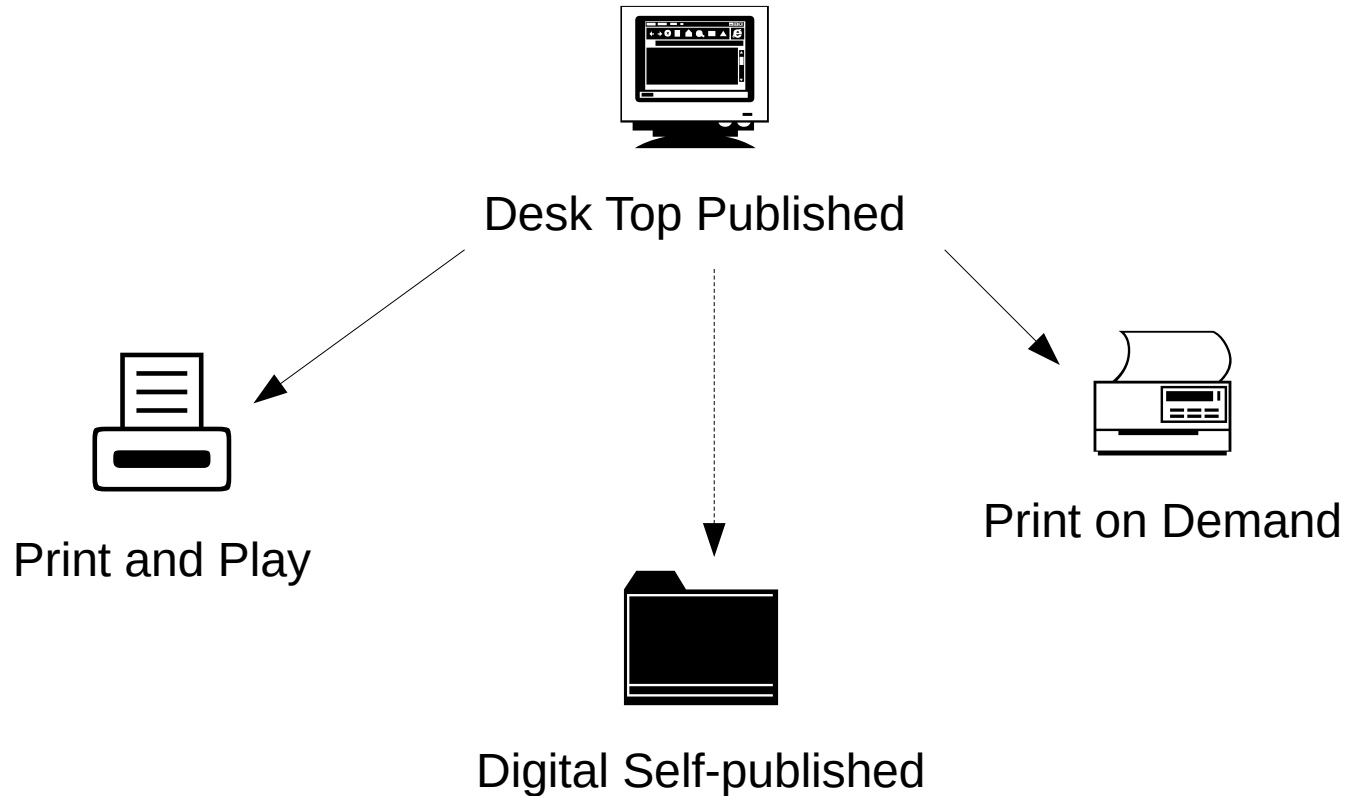
Desk Top Published (DTP)

- Using your desktop computer to create something gamelike.

- Pros:

    - DTP + Internet saved board wargaming from complete oblivion

    - Offers an outlet for creativity

- Cons:

    - Not everyone is James Dunnigan (but not everyone needs to be)

- What you need: software choices

- Thoughts on text and graphics

- How to make your own game components

- References and resources

DTP: Software

- **Text elements**:
  - word processor (Word, etc.) or hypertext generator (Quest, Twine)

- **Graphic elements**:
  - graphics program (Adobe product, GIMP, Inkscape)

- **Production**:
  - printing assistant (PDF maker, PosteRazor)

Software choices

Name	Primary use	OS	Free?	Notes/ link
Adobe Suite	any	Mac Windows	--	Illustrator, InDesign, Photoshop, Pro
Campaign Cartographer 3	maps	Windows	--	See various free alternatives below. https://profantasy.com/
GIMP	counters, maps	Linux, Mac Windows	yes	Raster editor http://www.gimp.org/
Google Docs Suite	any	Web-based	yes	Google Docs, Drawings, Sheets, Slides
Hexdraw	maps	Windows	--	Free trial available http://www.hexdraw.com/Word/
Inkscape	cards, counters, maps	Linux, Mac Windows	yes	https://inkscape.org/ https://boardgamegeek.com/thread/299033/inkscape-extensions-boardgame-development (map grids, card and counter generators by user Pelle Nilsson)
LibreOffice/ OpenOffice Suite	any	Linux, Mac Windows	yes	http://libreoffice.org
MS Office Suite	any	Mac Windows	--	Draw, Excel, Paint, Powerpoint, Visio, Word
nanDECK	cards	Windows	yes	http://www.nandeck.com/
Paint.net	counters, maps	Windows	yes	Raster editor http://www.getpaint.net/
Scribus	rules, cards	Linux, Mac Windows	yes	http://www.scribus.net/

Thoughts on text

- Rules are technical documents
- Layout and formatting of text
  - Index your rules according to main sections and sub-sections
  - Use a decimal numbering system that shows the hierarchy and relationship of the rules (2.1, 2.11, 2.111)
  - Order rules sections so they follow the sequence of play
  - Two columns of text on a page, no less than 10 point type
  - Use bullet lists judiciously
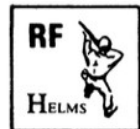 - Be consistent in use of bold and italic text

Thoughts on Graphics

- You can; but should you?
- Less really is more.
- WWRASD?

EXAMPLES OF PLAYING PIECES (from various SPI games)

Land Units

RF / HELMS

Type Abbreviation	M60	301	Unit ID No.
			Silhouette
Attack Strength	16 M 12		Range
Defense Strength (Hard Target)	[17] 6		Movement Allowance

Weapons Class

Class — IB 3 — Identity code
Fire Strength — 2 ⬦ 3 — Range Allowance
Melee Strength — ● Ff 5 — Movement Allowance

Division nr. — III
Regiment nr. — 6/3
Combat Strength — 4-10 — Movement Allowance

Nationality: FRANCE
Unit Type Symbol: ⊠
Combat Strength: 1

Naval Units

Gunnery Strength at: **Defense Strength**

0 thru 2 hex range	44	24
3 thru 5 hex range	24	
6 thru 7 hex range	13	A — Identity Code
8 thru 10 hex range	4	120 — Rating (total guns)

Attack Strength — 61 20 — Range Allowance
Defense Strength — 20 7 — Movement Allowance
Nationality Name — GE 741 — ID Code
Bismarck

Fleet Nationality and ID number

Anti-Air Strength — 9 US 4 — Movement
  6
Anti-Surface Strength — 9 4 2 — Defense Strength
Anti-Submarine Strength — 9 CG 4 — ECM Value

Ship Type and Silhouette

Anti-Aircraft Strength (at indicated ranges):
0 to 2   3 to 4   5 to 6

Surface Attack Strength — 19-12-2
  0 ▲ 2 — Defense Strength
Ship Type — CV 503 — ID Number
Akagi — Name

Nationality: USSR Surf-B
Type Abbrev:
Type Symbol:
Attack Strength: 4/2¹ — Fleet Quantity / Defense Strength

Air Units

▲ C
19

Air Combat Strength — 6 IS / F4 — Nationality / Aircraft Type
Ground Combat Strength — 2 U — Range Allowance

Nationality and ID number

Anti-Air Strength — 8 So 7 — Range Allowance
  42
Anti-Surface Strength — 12 3 0 — Defense Strength
Anti-Submarine Strength — 0 C — ECM Value
"F"

Type and Silhouette and Carrier-based Indication

Nationality Unit Type — ESC 6
Combat Strength — LRB
  7 4 — Range / Movement Allowance

Nationality: USA LRB
Type Abbrev:
Type Symbol:
Attack Strength: 2/4¹ — Fleet Quantity / Defense Strength

ACHIEN

NORTH ITHLIEN

DURTHANG

THE BLACK

MINAS MORGUL

SOUTHERN ITHLIEN

CRACK

Montenegro 6C1

Pec

Albania

Dubrovnik

Podgorica

Cetinje

Scutari

Durazzo

TITO
and his Partisan Army
Yugoslavia, 1941-45

Woodland Alliance

Outrage When a player removes sympathy or moves any warriors into a sympathetic clearing, that player must add a matching card from their hand to your supporters. If they cannot, they show you their hand, and you draw a card and add it to your supporters.

Guerrilla War In battle as defender, you use the higher roll and the attacker uses the lower.

Birdsong

1. **Revolt** *any number of times.*
   Spend 2 supporters matching a sympathetic clearing. Remove all enemy pieces there.
   Place matching base and warriors there equal to total number of matching sympathetic clearings.
   Place a warrior in the Officers box.

2. **Spread Sympathy** *any number of times.*
   Spend number of supporters listed on Sympathy track to place a sympathy, adjacent to sympathetic clearing if possible. Supporters must match the target clearing.

Daylight

You may take these actions any number of times.

- **Craft** *using sympathy.*
- **Mobilize**
  Add a card from hand to your Supporters stack.
- **Train**
  Spend a card from hand matching a built base to place a warrior in the Officers box.

Evening

1. **Military Operations** *up to officers.*
   - **Move**
   - **Battle**
   - **Recruit** *Place warrior at base.*
   - **Organize** *Remove warrior, place sympathy there.*

2. **Draw** 1 card, plus 1 card per showing. Discard down to 5 cards.

Supporters
If you have no bases on the map, discard any cards that would be added beyond 5.

Bases

Removing Bases. If a base is removed from the map, discard all matching supporters (including birds), and remove half of officers (rounded up).
-If no bases remain on the map, discard supporters down to 5.

Officers

Sympathy

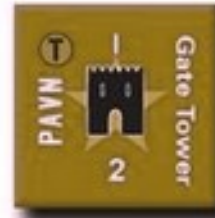| 1		2		3		
+1	+2	+3	+4	+4		
+1	+1	+2	+4	+4		

Placement Limits. Each clearing may only have one sympathy token.

Martial Law. You must spend another matching supporter if the target clearing has at least 3 warriors of another player.

Remember colourblind people!

	Original	Simulation				Hue	for Photoshop, Illustrator, Freehand, etc.		for Word, Power Point, Canvas, etc.
		Protan	Deutan	Tritan			C,M,Y,K (%)	R,G,B (0-255)	R,G,B (%)
1					Black	–°	(0,0,0,100)	(0,0,0)	(0,0,0)
2					Orange	41°	(0,50,100,0)	(230,159,0)	(90,60,0)
3					Sky Blue	202°	(80,0,0,0)	(86,180,233)	(35,70,90)
4					bluish Green	164°	(97,0,75,0)	(0,158,115)	(0,60,50)
5					Yellow	56°	(10,5,90,0)	(240,228,66)	(95,90,25)
6					Blue	202°	(100,50,0,0)	(0,114,178)	(0,45,70)
7					Vermilion	27°	(0,80,100,0)	(213,94,0)	(80,40,0)
8					reddish Purple	326°	(10,70,0,0)	(204,121,167)	(80,60,70)

- About 8% of men and 0.5% of women in the world are colourblind.
- Protan = protanomaly or protanopy (reds look greener, or the same)
- Deutan = deuteranomaly or deuteranopy (most common) (greens look redder, or the same)
- Tritan – tritanomaly or tritanopy (very rare) (blues and yellows are confused)

US MARINES 2/5 5 | Assualt Group | MACV Advisory Team 3 2

PAVN 4th 3 | Publicity | PAVN Gate Tower 2

ARVN 1st Airborne 6 | NLF 5 | ARVN Hắc Báo 4

# How to make counters or cards

- Layers
  - Text (fonts)
  - Images (can also be fonts)
  - Colours and transparency
- Keep it simple!

Layer 1 – counter frame grid
Spreadsheet, cells 0.5" square,
borders ~0.05 point
Locked!

Layer 2 – unit icons
Grouped text boxes
Icons: dingbat fonts or small
graphics
Numbers/letters: Univers or
Helvetica

Layer 3 - colours
Filled rectangle, no border, ~50%
transparency, sent to back

Two halves of countersheet are
mirror images, to form front and back
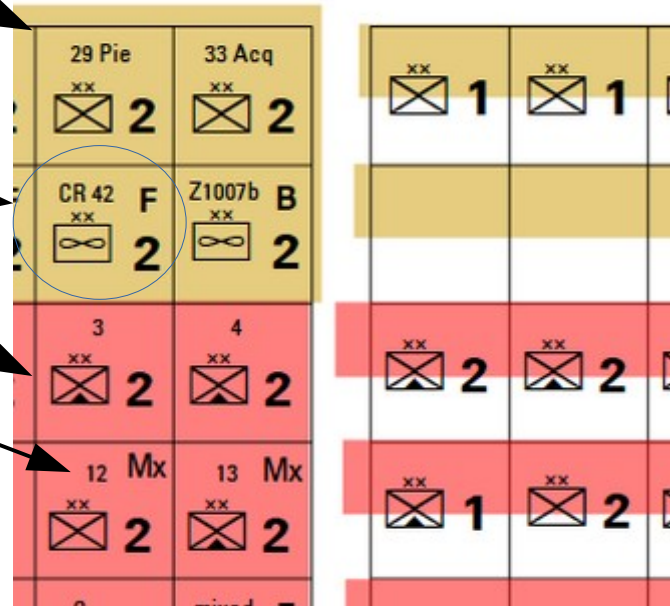
Layer 1 – card frame grid
Table, 2.5" x 3.5", borders ~0.05
point, ~90% transparent
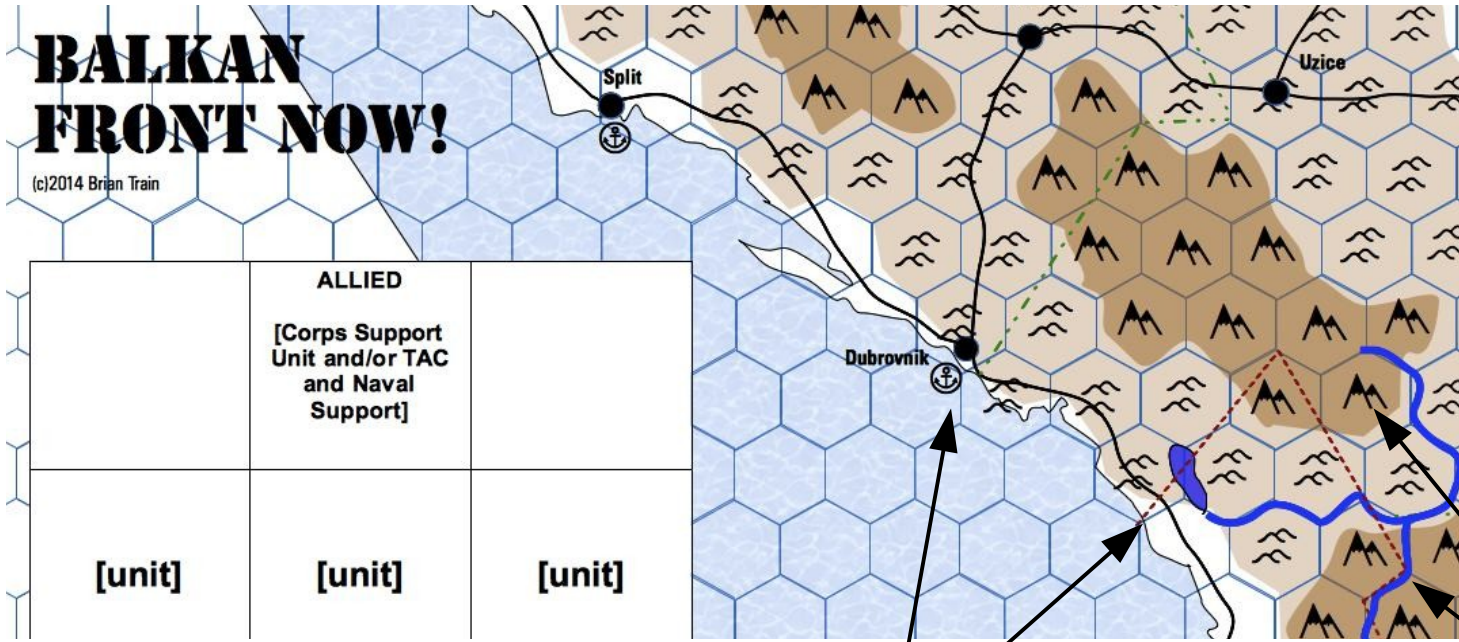background image/ texture
Locked!

Layer 2 – image
.jpg or .png format, scaled

Layer 3 – text boxes
Filled rectangle if shaded, no
border, ~50% transparency, sent
to back

6

Factionalism

Friction.
Either remove up to 3 Guerrillas in any
1 Wilaya to Available, or move the
France Track up to 2 boxes towards "A".

Lube.
Free Rally in any 1 selectable space
with a Base.

How to make a map

- Layers
  - Map divisions (area, hex, point-to-point)
  - Features (natural and man-made)
  - Additional graphic elements (tables, charts, ornamentation)

BALKAN FRONT NOW!

(c)2014 Brian Train

	ALLIED	
	[Corps Support Unit and/or TAC and Naval Support]	
[unit]	[unit]	[unit]

Split

Dubrovnik

Uzice

Layer 1 – *hex grid*
Inserted pdf, locked

Layer 2 – *coastlines*
Water is filled polygon

Layer 5 – *embellishment*
Fancy text boxes, icons, tables

Layer 4 – *artificial terrain*
Icons, freeform or straight coloured lines (railways, borders)

Layer 3 – *natural terrain*
Filled shapes, icons, freeform coloured lines

Production

- Counters
- Cards
- Maps
- "Export as PDF"
- Managing file sizes

References and resources

- **Fonts**:
  - Tom Mouat's Mapsymbs (www.mapsymbs.com)
  - https://freefontsdownload.net
- **Graphics**:
  - "Graphics and Physical Systems Design" by Redmond A. Simonsen (S. III of *Wargame Design*, SPI) https://brtrain.files.wordpress.com/2020/11/graphics-and-physical-systems-design-ras.pdf
  - Grids of all kinds: https://incompetech.com/graphpaper/
  - Don't forget our RPG friends: https://alternativeto.net/list/8589/free-online-map-makers-for-rpgs
  - Colourblindness simulators: https://www.makeuseof.com/tag/3-easytouse-online-colorblindness-simulators/
- **Tutorials, general guidance etc.**:
  - Gary Christiansen on making counters http://privatewars.kyth.org/making_your_own_counters.htm
  - Armchair Dragoons forum "Designing and Creating" https://www.armchairdragoons.com/forum/index.php?board=19.0
  - Guide to print and play: https://boardgamegeek.com/wiki/page/Print_and_Play_Games
  - Forum area with guidance for any aspect of making games yourself: https://boardgamegeek.com/forum/36/bgg/do-it-yourself
  - Facebook group "Wargame Artwork": https://www.facebook.com/groups/1421314084652690

Print and Play

The player obtains the digital DTP files you have created, prints them out, and assembles the components.

- Pros:
    - Low cost
    - Version control
- Cons:
    - Less appeal than a finished product
    - Few people really enjoy crafting
- Distribution models
    - Personal or institutional website (beware copylefting, Or Not!)
    - Wargame Vault (http://www.wargamevault.com/)
    - Wargame Downloads (http://www.wargamedownloads.com/)

Print on Demand

- Print on Demand: the "Artisanal Wargame"
  - You print small batches and hope for the best (BTR Games) OR
  - Someone else prints it for you; maybe they distribute it too
- Pros:
  - Inventory control
  - Someone else prints and maybe distributes it (saves you time, trouble and storage)
- Cons:
  - Many trips to the copy shop, office supply store, and post office
  - Someone else prints and maybe distributes it (and gets paid)
  - Can be expensive for everyone involved
- PoD People:
  - Local copy shop, understanding faculty member, oblivious employer
  - Blue Panther (http://www.bluepantherllc.com)
  - GameCrafter (https://www.thegamecrafter.com)

Digital Self-Publishing

- Your game, playable on a computer or browser

- Pros

  - No materiality means no production woes or time/expense spent crafting or printing

  - Version control

  - Some programs can handle mundane functions for you

- Cons

  - Learning yet more software

  - Creating yet another version of your game

- Distribution: primarily over Internet

- Interactive Fiction and Text-based Games

Software choices: digital board games

Name	OS	Free?	Notes/ link
Aide de Camp	Windows	--	Asynchronous only https://www.hpssims.com/Pages/products/adc2/ADC2-Main.html
Cyberboard	Windows	yes	Asynchronous only http://cyberboard.brainiac.com/index.html
Google Slides	Web-based	yes	Asynchronous and synchronous
Roll20	Web-based	yes	Need free account Synchronous only https://roll20.net/
Tabletop Simulator	Web-based	--	Must buy client; free to play; depends on Steam Synchronous only https://www.tabletopsimulator.com/
Vassal	Linux, Mac Windows	yes	Asynchronous and synchronous http://www.vassalengine.org/community/index.php
ZunTzu	Windows	yes	Asynchronous and synchronous https://www.zuntzu.com/

Software choices: text-based games

Name	OS	Free?	Notes/ link
Inform	Linux, Mac, Windows	yes	Programming language for text-based games http://inform7.com
Quest	Web-based, Windows	yes	No coding knowledge required http://textadventures.co.uk/quest
Twine	Web-based, Linux, Mac Windows	yes	No coding knowledge required http://twinery.org
Any HTML editor	web-based	yes	Construct any piece of interactive fiction like a website – it's all hypertext

Conclusion

- Review of points
  - Why, what, how self-publish
  - Text + graphics = components
  - Production and distribution
- Questions?
- Slides: https://brtrain.wordpress.com/2020/12/06/postguws

(Graphics sources in this presentation: Boardgamegeek.com, public domain images, my own work. "Mr. Natural" character (c) Robert Crumb.)