

## GAMA Clubs & Organizations Program

March 2006; Sean Patrick Fannon

**Summary:** The GAMA Clubs & Organizations Program presents an opportunity for those groups around the country – and even the world – who are involved with playing and promoting games and gaming to become participating members of GAMA. In doing so, they gain the ability to communicate directly and effectively with the manufacturers, publishers, distributors, and retailers that serve the hobby games industry, as well as access to other resources and benefits that GAMA can provide them. In exchange, the rest of the gaming industry can benefit from working with such groups in both their promotional efforts (via in-store and convention demos and organized play, advertising and publicity opportunities, and direct marketing to club members) and their development efforts (primarily through playtesting and focus group feedback, but also through potential freelancer recruitment).

### **Part One: Definitions**

To begin, it is important to establish common terminology and a mutual understanding of what these terms mean in the context of this document.

**Clubs:** These are, for our purposes, groups of game players who are focused on either gaming in general, some genre of gaming, or the support of a particular game. They may take dues for minor things (to include paying for a space or a small newsletter), but they are not really revenue-driven at all. Clubs may support a specific game or company, but they do *not* have an official relationship with that company (other than, perhaps, getting some prize support for a special event once in a while). The more such a club identifies with a company, the less likely they are to continue to be treated as a club by GAMA.

**Conventions:** These are the bodies of folks that are considered the core staff and leaders of a particular convention. There are, in fact, two different types of convention groups – the non-profit groups (usually small and regional in nature) and the for-profit groups (normally national in scope, like *DragonCon*, *GenCon*, etc.). Such a group's main (and usually only) focus is the convention itself; they do not have a year-round profile, and they are not often a body of people that functions in any other capacity.

**Demo Teams:** Almost every company that supports a group to run their games has a different name for said group. Many such groups do more than simply demonstrate the games; they run tournaments, ongoing campaigns, and other related activities that promote the games. The central idea is clear, though – to present a specific company's products in the best possible light, thus promoting the line and fostering sales. Because such groups fulfill a clearly business-driven agenda, we have to view them separately from other groups.

**Organizations:** "Organizations" is actually a catch-all term for any group that doesn't quite fit into one of the other categories. This may include private groups of game masters who want to make actual revenue for presenting games, even

though they are not actually representing a specific company. It might also be used to refer to a group that functions much like a club, except that the members only really get together to run games once or twice a year at conventions. Any other group that may want some kind of relationship with GAMA, yet doesn't function as a club, convention, or demo team would be classified as an Organization. Theoretically, this could include another trade association, a collective of webzines, or almost anything else. It might also include clubs that *don't* have gaming as their focus (such as an anime fan group that might get involved in running a video room at Origins).

**Organized Play:** For clarity's sake, this phrase is used to refer to having a group of people go into a venue (club meeting, convention, game store) and run games for others to play in. This can include one-off scenarios, battles, and board game experiences. It can also include tournaments and competitive play, as well as connected gaming experiences (including continuing RPG and LARP campaigns). Unlike a typical "game night" or group of friends playing, high-level preparation, professional-level resources, and a focus on service for the players mark Organized Play.

## Part Two: C&O Membership Requirements

The following guidelines are used to determine if a group qualifies for membership in this program:

1. All potential C&O Members are recommended by the C&O Coordinator (or vetted by that person if recommended by someone else) and approved by the Executive Director.
2. Each accepted group gets one year of membership<sup>1</sup> for free. Each following year must either be paid for (at a rate of **\$50.00** a year) or earned through service. To earn the membership, a group must perform a total of **256** hours of service, either in Volunteer or Event Hours<sup>2</sup>.
3. A member group must have a minimum of **eight (8) members**, with a legitimate means to verify active members. Exceptions considered on a case-by-case basis for groups with a history of service.
4. A member group must have a legitimate and pronounced interest in the promotion and positive presentation of games and the gaming hobby and industry.
5. A member group must have regular (at least monthly meetings), or else have semi-regular meetings and frequent communication (via a website, Yahoo group, or similar means).

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<sup>1</sup> This is the "Clubs and Conventions Membership" as per the GAMA Bylaws

<sup>2</sup> As defined in the Origins 2006 Clubs & Organizations Policies

### **Part Three: C&O Membership Benefits**

Benefits for C&O Program Members include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Access to many member-only areas of the GAMA Web Site.
2. Access to a GAMA-hosted message forum for C&O members, to which other GAMA members will also have access and can engage in extensive discourse with C&O members.
3. GAMA Insurance Program access. As GAMA members, the club can offer the insurance benefits to its membership.
4. Discounts for members to attend Origins (50% off current ticket prices for members attending who are not otherwise getting badges for Game Mastering or Volunteering).
5. Passes for group leaders to attend GTS.
6. Invitations to participate in special events throughout the year.
7. Special GAMA and Origins logo items, both as freebies and at discounted rates.
8. Access to other GAMA membership benefits and programs as they are developed.
9. Manufacturer and publisher support for club gatherings, events, and such.
10. First line consideration for playtesting new games and game product.
11. The ability to participate directly in shaping future policies and programs that GAMA engages in towards the goals or promoting and selling games.

### **Part Four: Review, Revocation, and Reinstatement**

As clubs are involved in volunteering at GAMA events and presenting game experiences on the behalf of game manufacturers and retailers, event participants will be asked to fill out simple, score-generating surveys. Where appropriate, retailers and convention organizers will also be providing such feedback.

Manufacturers will also be able to provide feedback to the GAMA staff, indicating their relative satisfaction with a group they have interacted with. The GAMA Staff will regularly review this feedback, updating the information we have for each C&O Member and providing additional feedback based on direct dealings (such as with Origins). This information is then to be shared with GAMA Manufacturer and Retailer members so that they can make the best decisions about which clubs and organizations they want to interact with.

Clubs who score consistently badly will be suspended from the program. They can get themselves reinstated by independently putting on events at stores and conventions and then getting the proprietors to provide us positive feedback. Reinstatement would be judged on a case-by-case basis, with final approval by the Executive Director.