

The Golem of Redmond:

A History of Paizo

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Introduction

Paizo, Inc., is a Redmond, Washington, based publishing company in the realm of tabletop roleplaying games. Paizo's logo is a golem, and from that we can take a bit of inspiration. Our golem of study is one cobbled together from books, magazines, PDFs, and countless other documents, physical and digital, that have accumulated and adhered to its surface over the years. This paper will seek to understand its history and current position through analysis and collation of the documents that the organization has produced. We will find out how the great Golem of Redmond was built, and how it still runs to this day.

Paizo possesses a few specific qualities that, when combined, make it uniquely suited to in-depth documentary analysis. First and foremost, the size of Paizo is perfect. The organization is not so large as to be sprawled across multiple product lines and market categories like Wizards of the Coast or Games Workshop, yet not so small as to be difficult to find enough sources to support an outside analysis, such as an outfit like Green Ronin Publishing. With over 2,200 artifacts produced as a publisher, finding sources is not an issue. The company's product lines also have continuity entirely within the company, unlike systems such as Shadowrun or Star Wars (or even Dungeons & Dragons itself) that have been published across several rights holders, so tracking Paizo's changes and developments across time is much more straightforward. Paizo has also historically maintained an active public-facing presence between its press releases, blogs, magazine editorials, and more recent YouTube and Twitch productions. The tone and information of these public-facing documents varies based on author and era, but

even those variations give us insight into the company. Finally, personal access was an important contributor to the decision to focus on Paizo—that is, I own a great deal of Paizo materials in my personal tabletop roleplaying game collection and having access to the documents is the first step towards doing something with them. This is not to say that Paizo's story is the only story tellable. Tabletop roleplaying games are very underrepresented in ludology and historical studies more broadly, and the stories of these publishers and the people who live in their worlds are valuable and myriad. Paizo just fits nicely into available resources.

The approach I have chosen deserves a few lines of commentary before we dive in. Rather than working with interlocutors on Paizo staff or players in the community via interviews, I have chosen to focus entirely on the physical and digital signatures left behind by Paizo's passage through the world. My hope is to present a method of microhistorical, document-driven (quasi-archives driven) inquiry on corporations to allow us to study and write on said corporations without having to be beholden to the individuals that make up the entity itself. The publications and ephemera of businesses tell tales of their own without having to step into the world of the corporation in particular. I find this to be especially important in a digital age where a company could easily delete items available online if they knew a researcher was looking into things or was archiving the movements of the company. Beyond that, many corporations simply are beyond interviewing in a meaningful way, due to age, closure, or corporate policy. Thus this project differs from corporate history presented by a corporate

archivist or contracted historian in the sense that this is fundamentally an etic approach to the company's culture rather than the internal historian's necessarily emic viewpoint.

As of July 2021, Paizo is a small outfit with 76 employees, though in the context of tabletop roleplaying publishing, Paizo is likely second only to Wizards of the Coast in staff size.¹ Revenue is difficult to calculate, as Paizo (like most in the industry) does not release any sort of financial information or any sort of stakeholders report. That said, an approximation can be made. Industry journal ICv2 estimates that the tabletop roleplaying games industry is worth approximately \$105 million, up 31% from 2020 (which was itself up 23% from 2019).² ICv2's estimation is likely somewhat low, as their data is based on interviews with distributors, retailers, and manufacturers rather than hard sales data and focuses only on the American and Canadian markets, but \$105 million is a good starting point. ICv2 also ranks publications by sales through these distributors and retailers, where Paizo products typically perform highly, usually in second or third place in the market. For example, the Spring 2021 ICv2 report listed Pathfinder as the third highest-selling roleplaying product line from January to April, 2021,³ and last year during the same segment of time, Pathfinder was in second place and Starfinder was in

¹ Tineke Bolleman, *Breaking the Storm: Parting Clouds* (Redmond, WA: Paizo, 2021), 26. Additionally "small" here is defined by the Small Business Administration's Table of Small Business Size Standards, where Paizo comfortably flies below the 1,000 employee maximum for a publisher of their type (NAIC 511120 or NAIC 511130 depending on era).

² "Hobby Game Sales Over \$2 Billion in 2020," ICv2, July 16, 2021, <https://icv2.com/articles/markets/view/48827/>.

³ "Top 5 Roleplaying Games - Spring 2021," ICv2, July 20, 2021, <https://icv2.com/articles/markets/view/48851/>. Here Pathfinder's normal 2nd place spot is occupied by Cyberpunk Red, a system which debuted in November of 2020.

fourth.⁴ Another important datapoint is the Orr Group Industry Report published by Roll20, a virtual tabletop service, which reports on user usage on Roll20.⁵ The Q1 2021 Orr Group Industry Report shows a 5.63% share of games and a 6.00% share of accounts.⁶ The Orr Group Industry Report does have an inherent bias towards Wizards of the Coast's Dungeons & Dragons 5th Edition (which collects 52.94% of campaigns and 58.48% of accounts per the report), as many 5th Edition products are available pre-loaded into Roll20 due to the close relationship between Wizards and Roll20, so this should be understood to be a low number for Paizo's products. Paizo's products are more supported (primarily via volunteer efforts) by other virtual tabletop services such as Foundry, though to the best of my knowledge Foundry and the like do not release usage statistics.⁷ The final piece of the puzzle is an understanding that an unknown but presumably substantial portion of Paizo's sales are direct sales via Paizo's in-house subscription services. Indeed, three primary product lines (Pathfinder Society, Starfinder Society, and the Pathfinder Adventure Card Society Scenarios) are direct sale only. Currently, Paizo maintains 15 separate subscription services for its various product lines.⁸ All of this, along with the 76-member staff, leads me to qualitatively ballpark Paizo's annual revenue in the \$10 to \$12 million range, or around 10% of total market share. This, if anything, is a low estimate, and I

⁴ "Top 5 Roleplaying Games--Spring 2020," ICv2, August 12, 2020, <https://icv2.com/articles/markets/view/46309/>.

⁵ That is, a service that facilitates playing tabletop roleplaying games in an online setting.

⁶ "The Orr Group industry Report Q1 2021," Roll20, April 15, 2021, <https://blog.roll20.net/posts/the-orr-group-industry-report-q1-2021/>.

⁷ "Pathfinder 2E," Foundry Virtual Tabletop, accessed August 4, 2021, <https://foundryvtt.com/packages/pf2e>.

⁸ "Subscribe Today!" Paizo, accessed August 4, 2021, <https://paizo.com/store/subscriptions>.

would be comfortable going further to 15% or 20% of market share depending on what assumptions are made about average salary at Paizo, but the estimate gives us at least a general understanding of where Paizo sits in the marketplace. Assuming that the rising tide is lifting all ships, Paizo has also likely seen a substantial increase in revenue through the pandemic.

The Magazine Era

Originally, the core of the golem was made entirely of magazines. Before Paizo was even properly Paizo, Paizo sold magazines. The beginnings of the company rest, as many things in tabletop roleplaying games do, inside Wizards of the Coast, though at the point where we join its story Wizards has already been subsumed by Hasbro.⁹ Wizards of the Coast, in addition to bringing its trading card and roleplaying games to the table, also was responsible for the publication of three magazines: *Dragon*, *Dungeon*, and *Star Wars Insider*. *Dragon* and *Dungeon* were both inherited from TSR, the original publishers of Dungeons & Dragons, while *Star Wars Insider* was a contract gig from Lucasfilm. After a few years of dealing with the magazines, Hasbro made the decision to divest itself of the magazine publishing department of Wizards, as the toy company had no strong desire to be involved in periodicals, and Johnny Wilson, the head of Wizards' magazine publishing department, had no strong desire to shill for Hasbro toys.¹⁰ Wilson, however, did not have the financial resources to simply go it alone with his staff. For that, he had to call in backup.

⁹ "Hasbro gets the Wizard," CNN Money, September 9, 1999, <https://money.cnn.com/1999/09/09/deals/hasbro/>.

¹⁰ Johnny Wilson, "When Paizo Says, 'I Play, You Win!,'" *Dragon* #298, August 2002.

Shortly after Hasbro acquired Wizards of the Coast, in one of the many rounds of layoffs that occur when a company is acquired, long-term brand manager for Wizards of the Coast's Star Wars branch Lisa Stevens was laid off with around 120 of her colleagues throughout the company.¹¹ This move was particularly galling to the Star Wars fanbase, as Stevens had been a founding member of Wizards of the Coast (indeed, the first hire) and had worked there for nearly a decade in various capacities. Upon her departure, Stevens did make it known to several members of the Wizards staff that, should Hasbro ever decide to start removing and selling off portions of Wizards, to give her a call.¹² So Wilson did.

With Stevens and her partner in crime and spouse Vic Wertz in tow, Wilson had the financial backing to approach Wizards and Hasbro about purchasing the magazine division. Erik Mona, current publisher and Chief Creative Officer of Paizo, remembers both dread and hope in those early days of 2002. Mona recalls both “a strong undercurrent of ‘I’m sure I’m going to be fired soon’” throughout the office coupled with the relief of learning that Johnny Wilson’s ace in the hole was Lisa Stevens.¹³ After extensive discussions with Wizards and Lucasfilm, Paizo was officially established as a limited liability company on May 29, 2002, with Stevens and Wilson as its original directors (though by the first years’ annual report, Wertz had joined in

¹¹ Lisa Stevens, “Wizards Lay-offs: Lisa Stevens,” The Force, December 18, 2000, http://www.theforce.net/rpg/story/Wizards_Layoffs_Lisa_Stevens_74224.asp.

¹² Lisa Stevens and Erik Mona, “Paizo Publishing’s 10th Anniversary Retrospective—Year 0 (2002), Paizo, February 9, 2012, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748d9o51d43>.

¹³ Stevens and Mona, “Year 0.”

directorship).¹⁴ Work officially began on July 1, 2002, out of a fully-furnished office that had just been vacated on rush by another organization.¹⁵

Wilson brought the entire periodicals department, along with the three magazines, safely to Paizo fully intact.¹⁶ With Stevens and Wertz, the staff totaled 20, though an accountant position was quickly added, settling on David Erickson after some shuffling in the position.¹⁷ The initial Editors-in-Chief were Jesse Decker for *Dragon*, Chris Youngs (Thomasson at the time) for *Dungeon*, Dave Gross for *Star Wars Insider*, and Erik Mona headed up *Polyhedron*, originally its own magazine offering more experimental works within the D20 environment but by this point existing as the back half of *Dungeon*.¹⁸ While each and every member of the small team served a vital role, Kyle Hunter and Pierce Watters are worth mentioning here. Hunter was the art director for *Dungeon / Polyhedron*, and Pierce served as the overall circulation director for the magazines. Along with Stevens, Wertz, and Mona, until very recently these two were the only original staff members left at Paizo, though both did take breaks from the organization.¹⁹ Stevens held (and holds) the position of Chief Executive Officer, Vic Wertz was the Technical Director (and an associate editor for *Star Wars Insider*), and Johnny Wilson was

¹⁴ Paizo, "Certificate of Formation," UBI 602 208 820, May 29, 2002. Paizo, "Limited Liability Company Initial Report," August 27, 2002. Paizo, "Limited Liability Company License Renewal & Annual Report," May 9, 2003. Stevens' own recollection of events has Wertz being listed as an owner from the beginning, "Year 0."

¹⁵ Stevens and Mona, "Year 0."

¹⁶ Wilson, "When Paizo Says," 20.

¹⁷ Stevens and Mona, "Year 0."

¹⁸ *Dragon* #298, *Dungeon* #94, *Star Wars Insider* #62, and technically *Polyhedron* #153.

¹⁹ Pierce Watters was absent from the magazine masthead from mid-2003 through October 2004 and Kyle Hunter took quite a long hiatus after 2004, only coming back to Paizo in December of 2020. Just recently, Pierce Watters announced his retirement from Paizo. "Paizo Names Mike Webb Vice President of Sales and E-Commerce," July 1, 2021, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/v5748eaidgtku>.

the Publisher and President of the company. For a time, things were positive. There were early growing pains as the team learned that magazine sales move glacially and data on how changes are taken by the end user difficult to come by, and Stevens spent a great deal of effort trying to bootstrap her knowledge of the magazine industry by taking Wilson and Watters' magazine experience and looking at old wisdom with new eyes, "asking questions and challenging common practices."²⁰

After a busy second half of 2002, 2003 brought new opportunities and challenges. Paizo hired a frankly intimidating 17 people over the course of the year as they found more and more areas that Wizards had covered administratively that they now needed to fill, primarily customer service roles (including Jeffrey Alvarez on the customer service end, who currently serves as the President of Paizo, and James Jacobs on the editing end, who currently serves as Paizo's Creative Director for Pathfinder). Paizo also brought subscriptions in-house, which they continue to handle in-house today, and launched a fourth magazine: *Undeclared*, which was both a general tabletop gaming magazine as well as a "testbed" for their new in-house subscription plans. 2003 also saw the launch of Paizo's first Adventure Path *The Shackled City*, their now ubiquitous and unique adventure line, in *Dungeon* #97. Between *Dungeon* #97 laying the seeds for so much future success and *Dragon* #310 breaking sales records due to the inclusion of the Dungeons & Dragons 3.5 Edition GM Screen, the magazine business was looking up.²¹ A few

²⁰ Stevens and Mona, "Year 0." Lisa Stevens, F. Wesley Schneider and James Jacobs, "Paizo Publishing's 10th Anniversary Retrospective—Year 1 (2003)," March 29, 2012, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748d9o51da6>.

²¹ Stevens, Schneider, and Jacobs, "Year 1."

important staffing changes occurred. Initially Chris Youngs, then Matt Sernett, took over as Editor-in-Chief of *Dragon*, which moved Mona to Editor-in-Chief of the combined *Dungeon / Polyhedron*. Michael Mikaelian, who had previously served as the managing editor for *Star Wars Insider*, took on the Editor-in-Chief role at *Undeclared*. Most importantly, at the end of the year, Johnny Wilson left after a few too many clashes with Stevens, who had “questioned decades of common industry practices that he considered sacrosanct.”²²

Wilson’s departure in late 2003 caused the first of three great crises that Paizo had to navigate through during the pre-Pathfinder RPG era. In December, just as the year was closing, Stevens received a call from Lucasfilm—no Wilson on staff, no *Star Wars Insider* license. The licensing contract had included a clause allowing Lucasfilm to pull the magazine in the event that the experienced magazine hand left the company to a few editors and a relatively inexperienced CEO, which is exactly what had just occurred.²³

Star Wars Insider amounted to half of Paizo’s revenue at the time. Losing the magazine, which was set to revert to Lucasfilm after April, was a nightmare. Paizo attempted to restart *Amazing Stories*, a venerable old science fiction magazine that they owned the rights to from the Wizards sale, and attempted to move their *Star Wars Insider* staff to *Amazing Stories*, but building up a new subscription base for *two* magazines simultaneously, including the still-new *Undeclared*, was too much for the company to handle. By the end of 2004, Paizo had killed

²² Changes in editors from the mastheads in the relevant magazines. Wilson’s departure from Stevens, Schneider, and Jacobs, “Year 1.”

²³ Stevens, Schneider, and Jacobs, “Year 1.”

both the barely reborn *Amazing Stories* and the fledgling *Undeclared*, along with laying off six staff members, a move which twisted the knife particularly deeply in Stevens' gut, having been all too recently laid off herself. The details of the financial struggles are technical and are best explored in Lisa Stevens' blog post on the topic, but 2004 marked the hardest year of Paizo's history, then or since.²⁴

With *Dragon* and *Dungeon* providing the only life rafts left for the company, Paizo doubled down on the magazines. Both *Dragon* and *Dungeon* had substantial overhauls, with Mona going so far as to say that the new *Dungeon* was "essentially embarking on a new enterprise that begins with this very issue," and, sadly, that enterprise required the ending of *Polyhedron*.²⁵ *Dungeon* became, in many ways, the core of what Paizo would become: far-reaching monthly adventures coupled with advice and tools for GMs. Erik Mona became Editor-in-Chief of both *Dragon* and *Dungeon* at this point. Two more important faces joined the team as well, with Sarah E. Robinson joining as a graphic designer and Jason Bulmahn joining as the associate editor for *Dragon*. These two are now the Director of Visual Design and the Director of Game Design, respectively.²⁶ While 2004 was a difficult year, the core of Paizo's chief employees today had already largely formed.

²⁴ Lisa Stevens and Jason Bulmahn, "Paizo Publishing's 10th Anniversary Retrospective—Year 2 (2004)," Paizo, April 26, 2012, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748dyo5lddb>. "Amazing Stories™ and Undeclared® Going on Hiatus," Paizo, January 18, 2005, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/archive/2005/v5748eaic9jvb>.

²⁵ Erik Mona, "Building a Better Dungeon," *Dungeon* #114, September 2004, 6.

²⁶ Bolleman, *Parting Clouds*, 26.

Leaner and meaner, Paizo emerged from 2004 with a deep-seated need to diversify. The company either had to find new revenue sources or lay off even more employees. After much brainstorming, Paizo began making supplementary accessories and even some standalone adventures sold on their own terms and made under their own power.²⁷ The first GameMastery product, *Compleat Encounter: Dark Elf Sanctuary* debuted at Gen Con, the largest tabletop gaming convention in the United States, in the summer of 2005, marking the first freestanding Paizo product released. Later that same year, the GameMastery Map Pack line would be launched with the *Village Square Map Pack* coming out in November.²⁸ Paizo also released their first books in the form of a compilation of *The Shackled City Adventure Path* updated to Dungeons & Dragons 3.5 Edition rules and *The Dragon Compendium*, a collection of landmark and popular articles from *Dragon's* history, both also debuting at Gen Con 2005.²⁹ At Gen Con itself, Paizo also announced the formation of a new sister company: Titanic Games, which would not only eventually produce its own board games, but also would produce upmarket versions of games already made by Cheapass Games.³⁰ Finally, Paizo began reaching out to other, smaller companies to serve as a distributor and online retail portal for their merchandise, with Rich

²⁷ "Paizo Publishing, LLC Announces New Product Line," Paizo, March 16, 2005, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/archive/2005/v5748eaic9jwx>.

²⁸ Lisa Stevens, James Sutter, and Cosmo Eisele, "Paizo Publishing's 10th Anniversary Retrospective—Year 3 (2005)," Paizo, May 31, 2012, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748doyo5ldhf>.

²⁹ "*The Shackled City Adventure Path*™ and *The Dragon Compendium* Hardcovers Coming Soon!" Paizo, March 16, 2005, <https://paizo.com/store/books/dragon/news/v5748eaic9jww>.

³⁰ "Titanic Games Takes to the Water," Paizo, August 16, 2005, <https://paizo.com/paizo/archive/games/news/v5748eaic9k09>. "Application for Limited Liability Company," Titanic Games, LLC, October 21, 2005. Of interest in the filing is the presence of Cerberus Entertainment, LLC, as one of the founding members. I have never been able to track down much information about Cerberus Entertainment, though it occupied the same address as Paizo.

Burlew's *Order of the Stick* becoming the first such partnership.³¹ The banner year was best exemplified by Paizo taking home five ENnie Awards, given out each year at Gen Con to tabletop roleplaying game publishers, including a Silver ENnie for Best Publisher, particularly notable as this is a fan-voted award rather than a panel award.³² Finally, the second Adventure Path, *Age of Worms*, began printing in *Dungeon*, now a monthly feature rather than a somewhat inconsistent part of the magazine as *The Shackled City* had been.³³ Important staff adds include James L. Sutter (who we will hear much more about later in his capacity as fiction editor), Joshua Frost (who spearheaded much of early Pathfinder Society Organized Play), and long-term sales team member Cosmo Eisele who is still with the company today.³⁴

Lisa Stevens initially describes 2006 as a “retrenching” year. The team had established a six-point plan to stabilize Paizo (dealing primarily with expanding their magazine’s subscription base while diversifying outside of magazines to spread risk), and by and large, those points were taking shape nicely.³⁵ Paizo completely took over sales for Cheapass Games,³⁶ began producing Monte Cook’s Ptolus campaign setting miniatures,³⁷ became the only distributor for Dead

³¹ “Paizo Publishing Creates Strategic Alliance with *The Order of the Stick* Creator Rich Burlew,” Paizo, September 30, 2005, <https://paizo.com/store/books/dragon/news/pressReleases/v5748eaic9k1l>.

³² “Paizo Publishing Wins Five ENnies!” Paizo, August 20, 2005, <https://paizo.com/store/books/dungeon/news/v5748eaic9k0f>.

³³ Stevens and Mona, “Year 3.” Chris Pramas and Erik Mona, “Green Ronin Publishing Podcast, Episode 3: Pramas/Mona Sitdown,” September 19, 2007,

³⁴ Stevens, Sutter, and Eisele, “Year 3.” Bolleman, *Parting Clouds*, 26.

³⁵ Lisa Stevens and Erik Mona, “Paizo Publishing’s 10th Anniversary Retrospective—Year 4 (2006),” Paizo, June 28, 2012, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748dyo5ldkp>.

³⁶ “Paizo Publishing to Take Over Sales for Cheapass Games in March 2006,” Paizo, January 12, 2006, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/archive/2006/v5748eaic9k49>.

³⁷ “Paizo Publishing to Produce Ptolus Miniatures,” Paizo, February 10, 2006, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/archive/2006/v5748eaic9k55>.

Gentlemen Productions' films,³⁸ and began selling Steel Sqwire map accessories.³⁹ In-house, Paizo began producing their GameMastery Item Card line with the release of Item Pack One in March with more visual aids for Gamemasters to come later that year in October.⁴⁰ For their efforts, Paizo was nominated for five Origins Awards at the Origins Game Fair, another popular tabletop convention, and received four gold ENnies.⁴¹ For his personal efforts in making the magazines a tremendous success, Erik Mona was promoted to Publisher at Paizo, becoming the fourth and current Publisher of the company. He stayed on as Editor-in-Chief of *Dragon*, with James Jacobs being promoted to Editor-in-Chief of *Dungeon*.⁴² The golem with its new GameMastery components, was truly coming into shape. Under Jacobs' editorship, the third Adventure Path, *Savage Tide*, began in November within the pages of *Dungeon* #139.

The same year, unable to catch a break, the second great crisis of the pre-Pathfinder RPG era struck. With their initial contract with Wizards of the Coast set to end in March of 2007, Lisa Stevens scheduled a meeting with Wizards to discuss their future together, being that Paizo was positioned to pour a great deal of money and resources into building up the magazines even further. On May 30, 2006, Wizards of the Coast informed Stevens that they

³⁸ "Now Playing! — Dead Gentlemen Productions," Paizo, June 5, 2006, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/archive/2006/v5748eaic9k8f>.

³⁹ "Steel Sqwire Products To Be Published By Paizo Under License," Paizo, November 9, 2006, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/archive/2006/v5748eaic9kcm>.

⁴⁰ Stevens and Mona, "Year 3." "Paizo Publishing, LLC to Release GameMastery Item Pack: Adventure Gear," Paizo, October 4, 2006, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/archive/2006/v5748eaic9kbf>.

⁴¹ "Paizo Publishing Receives Five 2006 Origins Awards Nominations," Paizo, March 15, 2006, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/archive/2006/v5748eaic9k5y>. Stevens and Mona, "Year 3."

⁴² "Erik Mona Promoted to Publisher of Paizo Publishing," Paizo, April 6, 2006, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/archive/2006/v5748eaic9k6h>. Stevens and Mona, "Year 3."

were not planning on renewing the contract. Stevens was able to extend the end date on the *Savage Tide* Adventure Path, but the driving heart of the golem, so recently reinforced, had been struck.⁴³ From our perspective today, we can see that this was the beginning of the death of the magazines that had captured gamers' imaginations for so many years. Wizards of the Coast moved *Dungeon* and *Dragon* to an online-only format beginning in September of 2007,⁴⁴ and then finally mothballed both publications entirely in December of 2013.⁴⁵ I should emphasize that Paizo has, to the best of my knowledge, never villainized Wizards for their decision to pull the magazines. Stevens and Mona have both emphasized at different points in time how generous and open Wizards was, both in telling Paizo so early and in allowing for the contract extension.⁴⁶ That all said, Paizo had a fight ahead of it for survival.

Looking back now, 2007 has a bit of the feeling of throwing spaghetti at the wall, trying to build up the golem as quickly as possible with whatever seemed to be working at the time. This is, of course, only true when looking at what makes up the golem *today*. That Paizo released a modular board game called *Stonehenge* and was confident enough in it to translate it into at least two other languages might seem absurd today, but sure enough, *Stonehenge* was a big part of Paizo's 2007 strategy.⁴⁷ Paizo also began its line of classic science fiction reprints

⁴³ Stevens and Mona, "Year 3."

⁴⁴ "Paizo Publishing to Cease Publication of *Dragon* and *Dungeon*," Paizo, April 19, 2007, <https://paizo.com/store/books/dragon/news/pressReleases/v5748eaic9kh0>.

⁴⁵ Chris Perkins, "Going Dark," *Dragon* #427, October 2013.

⁴⁶ Stevens and Mona, "Year 3." Pramas and Mona, "Pramis/Mona Sit Down."

⁴⁷ James Sutter, "Stonehenge Trailer Released," Paizo, July 11, 2007, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748dyo5la67>.

called Planet Stories, another move that seems strange from the perspective of 2021 but was a key strategic decision at the time.⁴⁸ Paizo also further doubled down on supplemental accessory releases, putting out at least 13 different accessory products (cards, maps, etc.).⁴⁹

The big move in 2007, though, was replacing the golem's broken heart. While Paizo had through August 2007 to continue making moves with the magazines, in April 2007, they revealed to the world the new plan: Paizo would move away from magazines and become its own freestanding gaming company. Not just any freestanding gaming company, working as so many others did at the edges of Dungeons & Dragons and releasing supplemental works for the D20 system. No, Paizo would adopt as its core business the thing that *Dungeon* had become famous for: the Adventure Path. The new Pathfinder Adventure Path line would be (and continues to be) a 96-page softcover publication containing one-sixth of a complete adventure along with various support articles and monster entries to expand upon the world setting.⁵⁰ A volume of the new Pathfinder Adventure Path would drop monthly, for two complete adventures per year.⁵¹ Days later, Paizo announced that they would also be producing self-contained adventure modules as part of a new GameMastery line, with the first, *Hollow's Last Hope*, being released on that year's Free RPG Day.⁵² All told, in 2007, Paizo would release

⁴⁸ "Introducing Planet Stories: Classic Science Fiction Fantasy Novels," Paizo, March 30, 2007, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/archive/2007/v5748eaic9kgf>.

⁴⁹ This is by my count and the number is likely slightly higher.

⁵⁰ Worth noting that there has been one exception to this, *A Song of Silver*, the 100th Adventure Path volume, ran 128 pages.

⁵¹ "Introducing Pathfinder: Paizo's Adventure Path Monthly," Paizo, April 19, 2007, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/archive/2007/v5748eaic9kh3>.

⁵² Jason Bulmahn, "The First One's On Us," Paizo, April 24, 2007, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748doyo5la7n>.

nine standalone modules and four volumes of the Pathfinder Adventure Path. The writers were often freelancers who had worked on the *Dungeon* Adventure Paths (along with James Jacobs penning a few volumes). For example, the writers on the last *Dungeon* Adventure Path, *Savage Tide*, included, in order, James Jacobs, Nicholas Logue, Richard Pett, Jason Bulmahn, Stephen S. Greer, Gary Holian, F. Wesley Schneider, James L. Sutter, Tito Leati, Robert J. Schwalb, Eric L. Boyd, Wolfgang Baur, and Greg A. Vaughan.⁵³ The authors for the first Pathfinder Adventure Path, *Rise of the Runelords*, included, in order, James Jacobs, Richard Pett, Nicolas Logue, Wolfgang Baur, Stephen S. Greer, and Greg A. Vaughan. Indeed, to the best of my knowledge, the only member of the *Savage Tide* author pool who has never contributed to a non-magazine Paizo project is Gary Holian. However, not only did Paizo make the adventures, they had to make a whole new world for them.

At this time, we need to take a brief aside to discuss licensing. In 2000, Wizards of the Coast had released Dungeons & Dragons 3rd Edition, and more to the point, they had released the core rules of the system under their Open Gaming License (OGL). The OGL had a number of vital features for the broader tabletop roleplaying game community and spawned the Open Gaming Movement, which deserves its own in-depth analysis. In short, the OGL allowed third-party companies (such as Paizo) to use the 3.0 and 3.5 ruleset of Dungeons & Dragons, as well as some of the creatures, to create and release their own compatible works. However, Wizards of the Coast did not release their *worlds*, the countries and people and stories, under

⁵³ *Dungeon* #139-#150.

the OGL. A company looking to use the 3.5 Edition ruleset could not set its books in Greyhawk, for example, as Greyhawk was not covered under the OGL. Perhaps most importantly, the OGL was irrevocable—the license was written without a clause allowing Wizards of the Coast to pull the license from either its products or the products of a third-party developer, so long as the third-party developer followed all the clauses stated in the license.⁵⁴ The OGL was permanent, but limited to mechanics. Paizo could use those mechanics as a base, but because of what was available under the OGL, had to generate their own setting.

Paizo took to the task of worldbuilding with zeal. At Gen Con 2007, Paizo announced the Pathfinder Chronicles series, books detailing the world of Pathfinder called Golarion.⁵⁵ And while the first Chronicles books would not see the light of day until 2008, the Adventure Path volumes already began fleshing out the world with their supporting articles and new bestiary entries. By the time *Dragon* and *Dungeon* had ceased physical publication, a new course had been set. The golem had shed its magazines for Adventure Paths and sourcebooks.

At that very same Gen Con, however, the third great crisis struck—Dungeons and Dragons 4th Edition.⁵⁶ Announced for the following August, the sunseting of 3.5 Edition loomed large over a Paizo staff that had just doubled down and committed to launching two

⁵⁴ “Open Game License Version 1.0a,” Wizards of the Coast, 2000.

⁵⁵ “Introducing Pathfinder Chronicles™—Paizo’s New Campaign Setting,” Paizo, August 3, 2007, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/archive/2007/v5748eaic9kos>.

⁵⁶ Lisa Stevens and Christopher Self, “Paizo Publishing’s 10th Anniversary Retrospective—Year 5 (2007),” Paizo, July 26, 2012, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748dyo5ldp4>. I would prefer to cite a Wizards article here, but their digital-born content is mostly lost to website redesigns and has not been as thoroughly archived as Paizo’s has.

new lines of 3.5-compatible materials. Additionally, Wizards of the Coast, in some degree of internal turmoil, did not adequately communicate with its third-party developers at any point in the process, only telling the team that 4th Edition would be released under a new license and that license would be coming soon.⁵⁷ By late October, no new information had materialized and the increasing tenor of the conversation was a possible move to a new system entirely.⁵⁸ The new license for Wizards of the Coast would not materialize until June 2008, and, more importantly, the license was revocable unilaterally by Wizards. That is, Wizards could, at any time, remove its materials from the license and force third-party developers to destroy their now-illegal materials.⁵⁹

Tired of the waiting and the anxiety that comes with it, Paizo pulled the trigger and, on March 18, 2008, announced the Pathfinder RPG, designed primarily by Jason Bulmahn.⁶⁰ I personally remember this as being an absolute bombshell of an announcement. 4th Edition was looking increasingly like a dramatic departure from 3.5 Edition, and the promise of a sort of “3.75,” as Erik Mona called it in the early speculative days,⁶¹ was a welcome, if surprising, safe harbor for many. Paizo not only rejected 4th Edition, but staked the claim that they could make something better—or at least something competitive—in the same genre and marketplace as

⁵⁷ Pramas and Mona, “Green Ronin Publishing Podcast Episode 3.”

⁵⁸ Erik Mona, “4.0: PAIZO IS STILL UNDECIDED,” Paizo, October 23, 2007, <https://paizo.com/threads/rzs2hnh>.

⁵⁹ Wizards of the Coast, “D&D 4E Game System License,” 2008, rev. 2009.

⁶⁰ “Paizo Publishing® Announces the *Pathfinder RPG*™,” Paizo, March 18, 2008, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/archive/2008/v5748eaic9l3h>.

⁶¹ Mona, “PAIZO IS STILL UNDECIDED.”

Wizards of the Coast. Paizo not only moved to challenge Wizards at the level of the rules and the world, but also in its organized play system. Concurrent with the development of the Pathfinder RPG, Paizo also announced its new organized play campaign, Pathfinder Society, headed up by veteran Nicholas Logue.⁶² Paizo also opened up the development process of its new RPG to the broader community in an entirely unheard of way: the Open Playtest. Within a week of the Alpha release of the Pathfinder RPG Playtest, Paizo had already seen over 10,000 downloads of the new ruleset.⁶³ Bulmahn's baby would garner more than 50,000 contributors by the end of the development cycle, by far the largest RPG playtest until the release of Pathfinder Second Edition.⁶⁴

Including the Alpha and Beta playtests, Paizo produced somewhere around 80 individual products (including the Planet Stories science fiction publications) in 2008, not including t-shirts and other pieces of general merchandise.⁶⁵ Paizo had the support of the community and the hobby behind them if sales are any indication. Pathfinder entered into ICv2's Top Five for the first time in Fall of 2008 behind strong sales of its Adventure Paths and the physical version of the Beta playtest.⁶⁶ Beyond sales, 2008 also marked the first PaizoCon, put on by volunteers but

⁶² "Paizo Announces the Pathfinder RPG."

⁶³ "10,000 Gamers Download Pathfinder RPG in One Week," Paizo, March 26, 2008, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/archive/2008/v5748eaic914f>.

⁶⁴ Lisa Stevens, Sean K Reynolds, Christopher Carey, and Jason Bulmahn, "Paizo Publishing's 10th Anniversary Retrospective—Year 6 (2008)," Paizo, August 30, 2012.

⁶⁵ By my count, though as before, this is a lower bound.

⁶⁶ "Top Fall 2008 RPGs," ICv2, December 2, 2008, <https://icv2.com/articles/games/view/13825/>.

later adopted by Paizo as an official, company-owned event. The initial event, while small, portended great things for the future of the company.⁶⁷

Movement was happening in other areas of Paizo's business as well. On the Pathfinder Society front, Joshua Frost quickly replaced Nicholas Logue as the head of Society-related issues and managed to push out 10 adventures before the year's end. For their standalone GameMastery Modules line, Paizo had launched an American Idol-style RPG Superstar competition in 2007 that culminated in Christine Schneider winning in 2008 and publishing an adventure for the company the following January.⁶⁸ In slightly sad news, Titanic Games, LLC, seemed to have been cast out as an ill-fitting piece of the golem, with the state of Washington administratively dissolving it after the company failed to file its annual report.⁶⁹

August of 2009, Gen Con, was the big show, and what a show it was. The Paizo blog, officially launched back in April of 2007 with relatively little fanfare, is filled to the brim with snapshots and short tales from the convention floor with the company virtually live-blogging its movements through the convention.⁷⁰ Paizo sold out of its first print run on the Core Rulebook before the books even got to the convention hall.⁷¹ Joshua Frost's efforts at promoting Pathfinder Society organized play were also a great success, with 62 tables running four new

⁶⁷ Stevens, Reynolds, Carey, and Bulmahn, "Year 6."

⁶⁸ "Christine Schneider Wins Paizo's First RPG Superstar™!" Paizo, February 20, 2008, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/archive/2008/v5748eaic911z>.

⁶⁹ "Certificate of Administrative Dissolution," UBI 602 550 663, February 1, 2008.

⁷⁰ Link to the particular page archive for the interested: <https://paizo.com/community/blog/2009/august>.

⁷¹ "Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook Sold Out!" Paizo, August 3, 2009, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/archive/2009/v5748eaic9ma1>.

Pathfinder RPG adventures in just the first two slots at Gen Con.⁷² Paizo quickly rocketed up to second place in ICv2's Top Five rankings, a position it has rarely fallen below since.⁷³

Beyond success on the convention floor, Paizo, now the owner of their own intellectual property, began attracting licensees of their own. Since the beginning, Paizo has published all Pathfinder rules under the OGL as a matter of principle, allowing other companies to develop compatible games for the system. Additionally, Paizo has also had a long tradition of partnering with outside companies to make products directly supporting Pathfinder RPG play. For example, in 2009, Reaper began producing Pathfinder Miniatures and Q-Workshop began producing Pathfinder Adventure Path-themed dice sets.⁷⁴

The Classical Era

After the release of the Pathfinder RPG, now generally known as Pathfinder First Edition, Paizo entered into what I like to call the “Classical Era.” From 2009 to 2015, Paizo saw genuine stability and growth, adding more product lines and hiring more staff. Paizo leaned hard into the Great Recession, hiring, on average, about eight new employees per year from 2009 to 2015. Turnover was also relatively low through the first half of 2015, with on average three employees leaving per year. The company grew from 22 people at the end of 2008, nearly

⁷² Joshua Frost, “Pathfinder Society off to a good start,” Paizo, August 13, 2009, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748d9o5lah0>.

⁷³ “Top Q3 2009 RPGs,” ICv2, November 5, 2009, <https://icv2.com/articles/games/view/16202/>.

⁷⁴ “Paizo Partners with Reaper to Produce Pathfinder Miniatures,” Paizo, August 12, 2009, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/archive/2009/v5748eaic9maw>. Lisa Stevens, Robert G. McCreary, and Sara Marie, “Paizo Publishing’s 10th Anniversary Retrospective—Year 7 (2009),” Paizo, September 27, 2012, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748d9o5ldxl>.

identical to the initial magazine staff size, to more than double at 54 employees by the end of 2015. By the end of 2015, the majority of the staff was all RPG-era hires, with only 14 employees remaining from the magazine era by the end of 2015 (though this core was, by and large, the company administration).⁷⁵

During this Classical Era, the golem grew bold new attachments as the company tried new options and pursued new opportunities. In February of 2010, the Pathfinder Tales series of novels was announced with the first book, *Prince of Wolves* by Dave Gross, former Editor-in-Chief of both *Star Wars Insider* and *Amazing Stories*, coming out in the fall.⁷⁶ While this was not the first fiction to be published about the world of Golarion, as short, episodic fiction had appeared in every Pathfinder Adventure Path publication to this point in history, the novels (and Web Fiction, which launched around the same time) allowed a glimpse of Golarion without having to own six to eighteen additional books to get a complete story. James Sutter and Erik Mona's Planet Stories would continue along until 2012 when the final Planet Story, *The Chalice of Death: Three Novels of Mystery in Space* by Robert Silverberg was published.⁷⁷ Pathfinder Tales Web Fiction lasted through July 2015, at which point the blog became too dense with other materials of higher priority to keep the fiction slot going, and Pathfinder Tales

⁷⁵ Employment statistics gathered primarily through tracking changes in Pathfinder Society Scenarios published throughout the years. These adventures, as digital-born documents, do not have the long printing lead time that the physical books and other publications do, and so the credits are typically accurate within a month of reality.

⁷⁶ "Paizo Announces New Pathfinder Fiction Line," Paizo, February 17, 2010, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/archive/2010/v5748eaic9mo3>.

⁷⁷ Erik Mona, "Planet Stories Hiatus," Paizo, February 10, 2012, <https://paizo.com/threads/rzs2nlw9>

Novels lasted beyond the Classical Era into 2017 at which point difficulties with Tor (the publishing partner for the Tales novels) effectively put the line on an indefinite hiatus.⁷⁸

Beyond the Pathfinder Tales series, in 2012, Paizo also partnered with Dynamite Comics to create Pathfinder Comics,⁷⁹ and in 2013, Big Finish Productions was tapped to create audio dramas based on some of the Adventure Paths in a series called Pathfinder Legends.⁸⁰ The comics have achieved more success than the audio dramas, with the most recent comic publication coming out in January 2019 (the *Spiral of Bones* bound collection) and a Kickstarter currently underway for another series,⁸¹ while no new Pathfinder Legends productions have been released since 2017 (with the end of the *Curse of the Crimson Throne* series in June of 2017).

Outside of fiction, Paizo explored two other risky developments: moving into the card gaming world and trying their hands at video games. The first, the Pathfinder Adventure Card Game (PACG), was initially announced in 2013 in partnership with Lone Shark Games.⁸² Those familiar with Lone Shark Games might know its longstanding connection with Paizo—Mike Selinker, owner of Lone Shark Games, was one of the original directors of Titanic Games, and is

⁷⁸ James L. Sutter, “A Farewell to Web Fiction,” Paizo, July 22, 2015, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748dye5lhqx>. Erik Mona and James L. Sutter, forum posts on “What is Happening With the PF Tales Line?!?!,” Paizo, Mar 1, 2017, April 13, 2017, <https://paizo.com/threads/rzs2u7kl>.

⁷⁹ “Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Now a Dynamite Comic Book!,” Paizo, January 4, 2012, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/archive/2012/v5748eaic9ou4>.

⁸⁰ “Paizo Publishing And Big Finish Announce Licensing Deal to Create Pathfinder Legends Full-Cast Audio Adventures,” Paizo, August 17, 2013, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/archive/2013/v5748eaic9r0j>.

⁸¹ “I, You, We Be Goblins,” Paizo, May 11, 2021, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748dye6shnx>.

⁸² “Paizo Publishing Announces the Pathfinder Adventure Card Game,” Paizo, February 26, 2013, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/archive/2013/v5748eaic9qcn>.

credited in at least two Paizo publications creating in-world games.⁸³ The PACG was the first time Paizo had tried to add an entirely separate game system to its roster, to some modest success. The PACG was not a collectible card game, but rather more of a deckbuilding game where one would buy pre-set expansions to add to their deck and would work through adventures published by Paizo / Lone Shark Games modeled after the Pathfinder Adventure Paths. In 2014, Obsidian Entertainment was tapped to develop a mobile game based on the PACG in order to broaden the reach of the still-new game form,⁸⁴ and an organized play system was developed to support the PACG.⁸⁵ The PACG and the PACG Society are both winding down as of 2021, but by all indications had a successful run.⁸⁶

Paizo's adventures in video games had less success in this time period. Along with Ryan Dancey and Mark Kalmes, Lisa Stevens launched the separate entity Goblinworks in April of 2012,⁸⁷ and shortly after announced that Paizo had granted Goblinworks license to create an MMORPG based on Pathfinder.⁸⁸ As was the trend at the time, Goblinworks took to

⁸³ "Application for a Limited Liability Company," Titanic Games. Selinker is credited in the seventh and thirteenth volume of the Adventure Paths, *Edge of Anarchy* and *Shadow in the Sky*. Selinker was additionally partially responsible for the creation of the Harrow Deck, a game accessory that works like an in-world tarot deck.

⁸⁴ "Obsidian Announces Pathfinder License," Paizo, August 13, 2014, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/archive/2014/v5748eaic9s92>. Worth noting that the game has not been updated since 2017 and is essentially "completed."

⁸⁵ "Paizo Launches Worldwide Organized Play Program for Pathfinder Adventure Card Game," Paizo, July 3, 2014, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/archive/2014/v5748eaic9s45>.

⁸⁶ Tona Woldridge, "Pathfinder Adventure Card Society Update," Paizo, March 9, 2021, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748doyo6shlm>.

⁸⁷ "Certificate in Re Long," Goblinworks, October 29, 2014. Ideally I would have the original Certificate of Incorporation from the state of Delaware, but Delaware charges for these files and Washington does not. Notable that the corporation was founded in Delaware, but I have no evidence to indicate that Goblinworks was used as part of any sort of tax avoidance scheme.

⁸⁸ "Paizo Licenses Pathfinder MMO Rights," Paizo, November 22, 2011, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/archive/2011/v5748eaic9opl>.

Kickstarter for the initial capital to begin development,⁸⁹ raising over \$300,000 for an initial tech demo.⁹⁰ In the fall, Goblinworks launched a *second* Kickstarter,⁹¹ raising over \$1,000,000 for the game's development.⁹² By 2014, Paizo was still just showing around an Alpha build of the game.⁹³ The game was finally launched to the public in January of 2015 and had really become Lisa Stevens' passion project within the firm.⁹⁴ And then it stagnated for years. Paizo never spent a great deal of time promoting it on their blog and through other channels, and the Goblinworks blog was lucky to get a half-dozen update posts after 2015. Struggling along for six years after that initial launch, Goblinworks will finally pull the plug in November of 2021.⁹⁵

A few other notable new lines were released during this time period, especially in the realm of miniatures for gameplay. In August 2011, Paizo and WizKids Games announced the Pathfinder Battles series of pre-painted miniatures (differing from Reaper's non-painted miniatures). The Pathfinder Battles series runs on a booster system, wherein you buy a carton from your friendly local gaming store and get a set of randomized figures in said pack.⁹⁶ The

⁸⁹ "Goblinworks Announces the Pathfinder Online Technology Demo Kickstarter Project," Paizo, May 9, 2012, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/archive/2012/v5748eaic9pa9>.

⁹⁰ "Pathfinder Online Technology Demo," Kickstarter, accessed August 5, 2021, <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1675907842/pathfinder-online-technology-demo>.

⁹¹ "Goblinworks Launches Kickstarter Campaign for Pathfinder Online," Paizo, November 27, 2012, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/archive/2012/v5748eaic9py8>.

⁹² "Pathfinder Online: A Fantasy Sandbox MMO," Kickstarter, accessed August 5, 2021, <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1675907842/pathfinder-online-a-fantasy-sandbox-mmo>.

⁹³ Mark Moreland, "Lisa's Alpha Adventure," Paizo, July 4, 2014, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748doyo5lg9p>.

⁹⁴ Lisa Stevens, "It's Only the Beginning," Paizo, June 13, 2015, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748doyo5lhlq>.

⁹⁵ Bob Settles, "The Denouement," Pathfinder Online, July 27, 2021, <https://goblinworks.com/blog/the-denouement/>.

⁹⁶ "Paiz and WizKids Launch Ongoing Pathfinder Battles Prepainted Miniatures Line," Paizo, August 1, 2011, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/archive/2011/v5748eaic9oam>.

Pathfinder Battles series has been very well received and Paizo and WizKids continue their relationship to this day. The other major line to emerge from the Classical Era unscathed was the Pathfinder Pawns series. Rather than sculpted miniatures, the pawns are thick cardstock with small plastic bases that conform to the standard tabletop roleplaying game 1-inch grid. The first in the Pathfinder Pawns line, the *Bestiary Box*, was released in August 2012.

The one area of substantial instability during the Classical Era was Pathfinder Society organized play. Joshua Frost, after serving the Society for two years, left the company in September of 2010 in what I speculate was largely burnout due to the number of adventures he personally penned for the series, as well as backpacking most of the administrative responsibility for the Society.⁹⁷ The next individual to hold the position was R. Hyrum Savage, who had initially been hired as the team Marketing Manager,⁹⁸ but he was quickly moved into *also* holding the position of Organized Play Manager.⁹⁹ Savage's main lasting contribution to Pathfinder Society Organized Play was the creation of the Venture-Captain volunteer administrative layer, meaning that the Paizo Organized Play Manager did not have to *personally* oversee the entire worldwide system. Savage only lasted in the position until August of 2011 before being replaced

⁹⁷ To the best of my knowledge, Joshua Frost has the record for number of adventures written inside of one twelve-month period with eight Society Scenarios written between July 2009 and June 2010. No Organized Play Coordinator since Frost has attempted to both administer the giant organization and write for it with such fervor.

⁹⁸ "The Golem Gets a Genius!," Paizo, September 14, 2020, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/archive/2010/v5748eaic9nbb>.

⁹⁹ "Pathfinder Society Names Regional Coordinators," Paizo, October 4, 2010, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/archive/2010/v5748eaic9nci>.

by Mike Brock, one of the said Venture-Captains.¹⁰⁰ Mike Brock continued on until Gen Con 2015 after which Tonya Woldridge, who is still with Paizo today, took over the reigns.¹⁰¹ During Brock's tenure, Pathfinder Society Organized Play grew from around 10,000 to over 60,000 members, and Woldridge has only grown that since.

Two important business events took place during this era as well. The first was Paizo's official incorporation on January 1, 2014.¹⁰² This technical but vital step will allow Paizo to continue after Stevens and Wertz's retirements. Secondly, Paizo, for a window of time from Q2 2011 to Summer of 2014, topped the ICv2 charts for sales.¹⁰³ Just as much of this has to do with the failure of Dungeons & Dragons 4th Edition as the success of Pathfinder First Edition, but the moment still felt triumphant as a classic David and Goliath event. For the first time since ICv2 began publishing their top five lists in 2004, Dungeons & Dragons was not king. 2015 also saw the release of the 100th volume of the Pathfinder Adventure Path series, *A Song of Silver*.

¹⁰⁰ "Regional Coordinators." "Paizo Names New Organized Play Coordinator," Paizo, September 8, 2011, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/archive/2011/v5748eaic9ogy>. This post also offers a rare statistical glimpse into Paizo. As of the posting date, there were at least 10,000 individuals actively involved in Pathfinder Society Organized Play, which is pretty decent.

¹⁰¹ Mike Brock, "Congratulations to 11 new Campaign Service Award recipients," Paizo, July 31, 2015, <https://paizo.com/threads/rzs2sq4c>. "Pathfinder Society Announces Tonya Woldridge as New Organized Play Coordinator," Paizo, November 5, 2015, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/archive/2015/v5748eaic9u29>. Bolleman, *Parting Clouds*, 26.

¹⁰² Paizo, "Application for Profit Corporation," December 17, 2013. All legal shares in Paizo Publishing, LLC, were moved over to Paizo, Inc., on January 9, 2014. Paizo, "Plan of Exchange of Shares of Paizo Publishing LLC and Paizo Inc.," January 9, 2014. Paizo Publishing, LLC, technically still exists but is essentially just a name. As an interesting aside, as of accessing the businesses' official files on Washington's website, only Lisa Stevens is listed as an officer for Paizo, Inc., while Wertz still has his name on Paizo Publishing, LLC.

¹⁰³ Listing all eleven articles would be somewhat cumbersome, so the first is here: <http://www.icv2.com/articles/markets/20743.html> and the last is here: <http://www.icv2.com/articles/news/29999.html>.

Worth mentioning are the hires of Mark Moreland, Stephen Radney-MacFarland, Patrick Renie, Adam Diagle, Logan Bonner, John Compton, Owen KC Stephens, Linda Zayas-Palmer, Jason Keeley, and Amanda Hamon, in order, at Paizo.¹⁰⁴ Crystal Frasier also rejoined the company at this time after a brief hiatus. If you have played a Pathfinder adventure at any point in your life, the odds are excellent that one of these individuals (along with James Jacobs) developed or wrote said adventure. All but Frasier, Hamon, Stephens, and Radney-MacFarland are still with the company today producing outstanding work for tabletop gamers.¹⁰⁵

New Opportunities, New Systems

Nothing lasts forever, however, and Gen Con 2014 saw the release of Dungeons & Dragons 5th Edition. Wizards of the Coast's glacial release schedule for 5th Edition ensured that Paizo had some time to maneuver and brace for impact, but by and large, 5th Edition's release only moderately stunted Paizo's growth.¹⁰⁶ The year from Gen Con 2015 to PaizoCon 2016 was overall quiet on Paizo's front. Books kept being released, of course. By my count, from August 2015 to April 2016, the inter-convention months in this case, around 125 products were released by Paizo or its closest partners (Lone Shark, WizKids, Dynamite), including some

¹⁰⁴ Renie did leave the company for a time, disappearing from the credit lists on Pathfinder Society publications after September 2014, but was back as of the November 2018 publications.

¹⁰⁵ Bolleman, *Parting Clouds*, 26.

¹⁰⁶ By the end of 2015, a year and a half into its release cycle, Wizards had only released nine 5th Edition products to market, with only three in 2015. Wizards has maintained this ponderous release cycle.

serious heavy hitters like *Horror Adventures* and *A Song of Silver*. For the first time in quite a while, though, no major business-changing news was coming out of Paizo.¹⁰⁷

That all changed at PaizoCon 2016. In a genuinely shocking move, Paizo announced work on its second attempt at a sister system to Pathfinder: Starfinder. Headed up by James L. Sutter with assistance from Robert G. McCreary and Owen KC Stephens, Starfinder promised to be more than just Pathfinder in space, but rather an entirely new rules system and experience, though still grounded in the lore and universe that Golarion occupied (or once occupied, as it turned out). Starfinder was set to be released at Gen Con 2017 with not only the new Starfinder Core Rulebook and supporting materials, but the launch of a new Starfinder Adventure Path line.¹⁰⁸ The big difference between the Pathfinder First Edition launch and the Starfinder launch is that Starfinder had a closed playtest—that is, only certain invited people (and of course the Paizo staff) worked to stress test the mechanics of the game.¹⁰⁹ Starfinder Society Organized Play, which was not part of the initial announcement, was officially announced in early 2017.¹¹⁰

Interestingly, in the run-up to Starfinder, Paizo did not add any staff specifically to support Starfinder. Indeed, after the hiring of new CFO John Parrish after the retirement of

¹⁰⁷ I should note that Tonya Woldridge did take some serious strides on the Pathfinder Society side during this time, though many of those changes were organizational and largely internal to the Society.

¹⁰⁸ James L. Sutter, “Announcing the Starfinder Roleplaying Game!,” Paizo, May 28, 2016, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748d5l1tw>.

¹⁰⁹ James L. Sutter, “Starfinder—What We’ve Revealed So Far,” Paizo, September 30, 2016, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748d5l1j4s>. This ended up necessitating a great deal of errata in the system, but that is a story for another time.

¹¹⁰ Tonya Woldridge, “Starfinder Society, Paizo’s Newest Organized Play Program,” Paizo, March 8, 2017, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748d5l1jle>.

long-time finance guru Christopher Self, there was a very uncharacteristic nine month span where only two hires were made, and one of those hires was a rehire of former employee Michael Kenway to head up licensing. Even when the hiring gates did once more ease open in 2017, much of it was technical, such as Dean Ludwig as Director of Technology, Christopher Caldwell as an accountant, a few website team members, and so on. Diverting so much staff time to Starfinder without having to bring on more aid likely explains why there were few other big projects announced during this time period: everyone's hands were already too full. Editors Joe Pasini and Adrian Ng were both added closer to Starfinder's launch, likely to spread around the load a bit more after Editor-in-Chief F. Wesley Schneider left the company in May, though they were really the only "production" hires in this time period.¹¹¹

The Starfinder launch at Gen Con 2017 (incidentally the 50th anniversary of the Con) went well, though with changes to the Paizo blog after 2015 transforming the blog into a bit more of a classical social media page, there are sadly no pictures of the actual launch events available. We can, however, glance at the ICv2 rankings for the Fall of 2017 and the Spring of 2018 and find that, indeed, Starfinder has rocketed up to 2nd place, displacing Pathfinder itself to third and second only to Dungeons & Dragons 5th Edition.¹¹² From Paizo's own press releases, the Starfinder Core Rulebook allegedly outsold even the Pathfinder First Edition Core

¹¹¹ F. Wesley Schneider, "Wes's Last Words," Paizo, May 18, 2017, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748dyo5ljtw>. Josh Vogt, another editor, also left around the same time.

¹¹² "Top 5 Roleplaying Games--Fall 2017," ICv2, March 9, 2018, <https://icv2.com/articles/markets/view/39857/>. "Top 5 Roleplaying Games--Spring 2018," ICv2, July 30, 2018, <https://icv2.com/articles/markets/view/41009/>.

Rulebook based on speed of clearing out a first print run.¹¹³ Paizo even managed to snag a licensee to run minis for Starfinder.¹¹⁴

Besides Starfinder, 2017 saw several major moves in Paizo's internal structure. As mentioned, F. Wesley Schneider stepped down in May of 2017, but just after the Starfinder launch proper, James L. Sutter also called it a day, hoping to refocus attention in his life more on fiction and comic writing.¹¹⁵ Robert G. McCreary took up the torch as the Starfinder Creative Director, with Owen KC Stephens becoming the Starfinder Design Lead. Woldridge and McCreary brought on long-time Paizo contributor Thurston Hillman to head up Starfinder Society development.¹¹⁶ Sarah Robinson, very long term Art Director for Paizo, was also promoted to the level of Creative Director in late 2017.

Paizo also spent 2017 beginning the process of signing community partners who make content based on Paizo materials. To the best of my knowledge, the first such partner was the Glass Cannon Podcast, an actual-play podcast focusing on the Giantslayer Adventure Path, but many more podcasts, Twitch channels, and websites would follow.¹¹⁷ The partnership that has likely affected the most players of Paizo products is Paizo's decision to allow the Archives of

¹¹³ "Starfinder Becomes Fastest-Selling Product in Paizo History," Paizo, September 11, 2017, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/v5748eaic9w20>.

¹¹⁴ "Paizo and Ninja Division Announce Pre-painted Miniatures for the Starfinder Roleplaying Game!," Paizo, March 13, 2017, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/v5748eaic9vik>.

¹¹⁵ James L. Sutter, "Sutter's Last Blog," September 8, 2017, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748dyo5lk4l>.

¹¹⁶ "Paizo Announces Starfinder Society Organized Play Program," Paizo, March 8, 2017, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/v5748eaic9vg3>.

¹¹⁷ Dan Tharp, "Paizo Welcomes the Glass Cannon Podcast to the Family!," Paizo, June 15, 2017, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748dyo5ljw4>.

Nethys, a long-running fan website, to serve as the official System Reference Document for Pathfinder and Starfinder, with the official licensing agreement allowing the Archives to include materials normally held under exclusive copyright by Paizo as product identity.¹¹⁸

At the very tail end of 2017 and beginning of 2018, something suspicious was afoot. Paizo's blog posts and press releases continued their normal cadence of previewing new items, posting Society updates, and the like. But simultaneous with this banal promotion, Paizo had hired no less than 13 new staff members within five months, and these were not merely administrative hires. No less than five developers (Ron Lundeen, Chris S. Sims, Eleanor Ferron, Luis Loza, and Michael Sayre) and three editors (James Case, Leo Glass, and Jason Tondro) were hired, along with three additional members for the website team, a customer service representative, and a new public relations manager named Aaron Shanks. Something big was clearly in store, and I am amazed at Paizo's ability to keep leaks to a minimum. Thankfully, we did not have to wait long to find out what all the hires were for.

On March 6, 2018, with relatively little lead up, Paizo announced the playtest for Pathfinder Second Edition.¹¹⁹ Not only was Second Edition on its way, but Paizo planned on trumping their own playtest record by releasing and running a five month long Second Edition

¹¹⁸ "Paizo Partners with the Archives of Nethys on Pathfinder and Starfinder System Reference Documents," Paizo, September 13, 2018, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/v5748eaidgs4t>. This was a fairly surprising development in the community, as the Archives of Nethys beat out the then-more popular d20pfsrd website for the official stamp of approval. My personal speculation is that Paizo went with the Archives over d20pfsrd due to the latter having a more entrenched relationship with third party developers and third party content, while the Archives was entirely first party, but this is only speculation.

¹¹⁹ "Paizo Announces Second Edition of the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game," Paizo, March 6, 2018, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/v5748eaic9wg2>.

playtest. Not only would the playtest include the free downloadable playtest ruleset, but also a bound copy of the rules to be released in a 400-page behemoth during Gen Con 2018, a massive six-part adventure called *Doomsday Dawn*, and Pathfinder Society scenarios.¹²⁰ Jason Bulmahn and his team had quietly made an entire game under everyone's noses, and now they were inviting us all to join in and give feedback.

Big changes were also brewing on the public relations side. Historically a bit of a closed box, Paizo began for the first time actively engaging with its community via platforms such as Twitch and YouTube. The first sign of this was Jason Bulmahn running the Glass Cannon Podcast team through a version of *Crypt of the Everflame* revised for Pathfinder Playtest rules.¹²¹ Paizo also began giving voice in a direct way to their contributors, volunteers, and staff members of non-heteronormative backgrounds and later non-white backgrounds and experiences via blog posts.¹²²

¹²⁰ Jason Bulmahn, "First Look at the Pathfinder Playtest!," Paizo, March 6, 2018, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748doyo5lk19>.

¹²¹ Jason Bulmahn, "Pathfinder Playtest: Crypt of the Everflame," Paizo, March 9, 2018, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748doyo5lk1n>. Bulmahn also wrote out a complete commentary with timestamps to go along with the recording. This post also shows that Second Edition had been in development for over two years, quietly building up steam. Paizo also really picked up the pace on uploads to their YouTube channel around this time.

¹²² Rigby Bendele, Crystal Fraiser, Sasha Lindley Hall, Violet Hargrave, Isabelle Thorne, and Jen McTeague, "Celebrating International Transgender Day of Visibility!," Paizo, March 31, 2018, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748doyo5lkoe>. One of the most heartwarming posts for me personally was the 2019 Pride Month post by Judy Bauer, et al., "Paizo Wishes Everyone a Happy Pride Month!," Paizo, June 27, 2019, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748doyo6sgrb>. The Golem logo is decked out in full inclusive pride colors and I just adore it.

Pathfinder Second Edition was unveiled a year after the playtest began after contributions and feedback from more than 125,000 players were received.¹²³ In the run-up to the release of Second Edition at Gen Con 2019, James L. Sutter returned with pen in hand to the Paizo blog to write a series of short fiction vignettes on Pathfinder titled *Iconic Encounters*, beginning with the first, “Red Snow,” on the day of the Second Edition unveiling.¹²⁴ Since this series of posts, the Paizo blog has once again been home to a great deal of fiction from a number of authors, including the *Tales of Lost Omens* series focusing on Pathfinder Second Edition, the *Tales from the Drift* series focusing on Starfinder, the excellent *Windsong Testaments* series focusing on some of the in-world mythology of Pathfinder, and more. Paizo also produced its own actual play miniseries with a diverse group of gaming voices to promote Second Edition called *Knights of Everflame*.¹²⁵ Second Edition released to great fanfare and success on August 1, 2019, at Gen Con.¹²⁶ Paizo once more quickly found itself back at its comfortable second place spot on ICv2’s rankings after a bit of time away.¹²⁷

¹²³ “Pathfinder Second Edition Unveiled!,” Paizo, March 6, 2019, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/v5748eaidgsdo>.

¹²⁴ James L. Sutter, “Iconic Encounter: Red Snow,” Paizo, March 6, 2019, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748doyo6sgj8>.

¹²⁵ “Knights of Everflame Premieres Tonight!,” Paizo, July 30, 2019, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748doyo6sgt3>.

¹²⁶ Erik Mona, “Pathfinder Second Edition Launches NOW!,” Paizo, August 1, 2019, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748doyo6sgt6>.

¹²⁷ “Pro: Roleplaying Games Market Report and Top Brands Chart - Summer 2019,” ICv2, January 3, 2020, <https://icv2.com/articles/icv2-pro/view/44845/>.

Paizo Today

With the hiring of Payton Smith as Social Media Manager in August of 2019, Paizo's public presence became even more focused on interaction with the community. Beginning in mid-2019, Paizo began using its Twitch channel as essentially a television network, hosting its own content as well as content of its community partners. Starting in October, Payton Smith began posting weekly updates on such shows, which have become a staple of the blog even after Smith's departure.¹²⁸ Paizo also took a more patches-and-updates method to errata. Instead of book errata coming out per printing, Paizo has actively adjusted and recommended alterations to its products upon receiving community feedback.¹²⁹ Paizo also almost immediately launched its next playtest, this time of the *Advanced Player's Guide*.¹³⁰ With 2020 coming around the corner, Paizo could not have picked a better time to pivot to a more digital-focused strategy.

Paizo responded quickly to the coronavirus pandemic in 2020, following CDC recommendations in its packaging and shipping methodology,¹³¹ followed a few weeks later by the announcement that an in-person PaizoCon 2020 would be cancelled for safety, as well as a notice that most of the staff would be working from home.¹³² Smith and Shanks also launched

¹²⁸ [Payton Smith], "This Week on Twitch, Sept 30 - Oct 6," Paizo, October 2, 2019, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748dye6sgy7>.

¹²⁹ Lyz Liddell, "Core Rulebook Errata: Round 1," Paizo, October 30, 2019, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748dye6sgzq>.

¹³⁰ Mark Seifter, "Welcome to the *Advanced Player's Guide* Playtest!," Paizo, October 9, 2019, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748dye6sgzq>.

¹³¹ Lisa Stevens, "Paizo Update on COVID-19 from Lisa," Paizo, March 19, 2020, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748dye6sh5c>.

¹³² Lisa Stevens, "Paizo Update on COVID-19 from Lisa, Part 2," Paizo, March 26, 2020, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748dye6sh5t>. Paizo was able to put together an online PaizoCon in late May.

an early series on online gaming and how to transition your team to virtual tabletops.¹³³ Paizo participated in the Conquer COVID-19 Humble Bundle to raise money for first responders, offering over \$1,000 of Pathfinder and Starfinder products for only \$30 in order to do their part.¹³⁴ Paizo did unfortunately get hit with a substantial shipping slowdown in April with so much of the traditional distribution network grounded by COVID, but online direct sales seem to have buoyed the organization through this time.¹³⁵

In the wake of the George Floyd murder, Paizo came down hard on the side of racial justice, or at least as hard as a hobby company can, firming up its stance on internal diversity.¹³⁶ Paizo also joined in on the Humble Fight for Racial Justice Bundle,¹³⁷ which raised over \$4 million to support racial justice projects from the gaming community.¹³⁸ Paizo also gave its employees of Asian and Pacific Island decent an opportunity to speak their experiences in May of that year,¹³⁹ in addition to a Pride Month post and a Juneteenth post.¹⁴⁰

Aaron Shanks, "PaizoCon Online Will Be Scheduled For May 26-31," Paizo, April 27, 2020, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748doyo6sh77>.

¹³³ Payton Smith and Aaron Shanks, "Pathfinder & Starfinder Home Gaming Guide," Paizo, March 24, 2020, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748doyo6sh5r>.

¹³⁴ "Humble Conquer COVID-19 Bundle," Paizo, March 31, 2020, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748doyo6sh62>.

¹³⁵ Lisa Stevens, "Paizo Update on COVID-19 from Lisa, Part 3," Paizo, April 3, 2020, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748doyo6sh66>.

¹³⁶ "Black Lives Matter," Paizo, June 4, 2020, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748doyo6sh8w>.

¹³⁷ Aaron Shanks, "Fight for Racial Justice Bundle," Paizo, June 16, 2020, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748doyo6sh9c>.

¹³⁸ "Humble Fight for Racial Justice Bundle," Humble Bundle, accessed August 5, 2021, <https://www.humblebundle.com/fight-for-racial-justice-bundle>.

¹³⁹ James Case, et al., "Celebrating Asian Pacific Islander Heritage Month!," Paizo, May 25, 2020, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748doyo6sh8l>. I will say that giving their non-white employees a voice took longer than perhaps it should have.

¹⁴⁰ Jim Butler, et al., "Pride 2020," Paizo, June 10, 2020, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748doyo6sh93>. Diego Valdez, "Happy Juneteenth!," Paizo, June 19, 2020, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748doyo6sh9k>.

2020 did present one major challenge to Paizo: the Agents of Edgewatch Adventure Path. Though the Adventure Path began development in early 2019, Paizo found itself releasing a set of stories where the players played the police at a time when more and more voices were being heard against police violence in America. Erik Mona penned the open letter addressing the issue, as the Adventure Path idea was largely his and continued through his brushing off of the concerns raised by staff and Paizo's sensitivity readers. In recompense, unable to cancel the Adventure Path for financial reasons, Mona and Paizo committed not only to providing guidance to players on how to de-police the Adventure Path, but also committed to donating a portion of proceeds to the NAACP Legal Defense Fund in addition to the work Paizo had already done with the Humble Bundle.¹⁴¹

The last two years have also brought an additional focus to inclusivity in another area: the writers. Of the over 500 contributors, staff and freelancer alike, who have worked on Paizo products, over 20% are new contributors as of August 2019.¹⁴² Paizo has also made a conscious effort to give writers, especially writers of color, with more experience in analogous areas of the real world more voice and more ability to contribute to Paizo products.¹⁴³ As mentioned in the Agents of Edgewatch post, Paizo has also taken steps to bring in more diverse eyes to check their products before they leave to the printers. Diversity in the art has also been clear, with,

¹⁴¹ Erik Mona, "Agents of Edgewatch Update," June 22, 2020, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748d9o6sh9r>.

¹⁴² This is by my own count, which I am sure contains some errors. The exact number I have is 511 total contributors with 114 being new in the stated time period.

¹⁴³ Eleanor Ferron, et al., "Meet The Mwangi Expanse Authors!," Paizo, July 13, 2021, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748d9o6shqk>.

for example, the first wheelchair-bound character shown as a member of the in-world Pathfinder Society in the *Lost Omens Pathfinder Society Guide*.¹⁴⁴ The respectfulness to both people in our world and in the world of Golarion shows a tremendous amount of growth from the magazine days, especially in the realm of oversexualization of women and presentation of more adventurers than just western European lookalikes. The clearest evidence for a less sexualized Pathfinder is likely the Iconic sorcerer Seoni, whose presentation from First Edition to Second Edition gained a substantial amount of clothing without losing the core design vibe of the character.¹⁴⁵ An analysis of the changing art style across time in Paizo publications and tabletop roleplaying games as a whole would be an excellent contribution to the field.

Paizo managed to force its way through the difficult year of 2020 with relatively few additional scrapes and bruises. The company did lose long-time Managing Editor Judy Bauer to Wizards of the Coast,¹⁴⁶ and Stevens and Wertz announced their plan to retire within the next few years,¹⁴⁷ but overall the company was, and remains, stable. Much like the Great Recession of the late Aughts, Paizo has leaned hard into hiring during the COVID-caused recession as well, bringing on 19 people between March 2020 and July 2021, and while these have largely been administrative hires (customer service, warehouse, marketing, etc.), two developers have been

¹⁴⁴ Kate Baker, et al., *Lost Omens Pathfinder Society Field Guide*, (Redmond, WA: Paizo, 2020), 17.

¹⁴⁵ James L. Sutter, "Meet the Iconics: Seoni," Paizo, May 10, 2007, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748d9o5la75>. Mark Moreland, "Iconic Evolution: Seoni," Paizo, May 9, 2019, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748d9o6sgmr>.

¹⁴⁶ Judy Bauer's LinkedIn page, <https://www.linkedin.com/in/judy-bauer-9910208>.

¹⁴⁷ "Leadership Transition at Paizo," Paizo, June 15, 2020, <https://paizo.com/paizo/press/v5748eaidgt3z>.

added to the roster.¹⁴⁸ Paizo has remained cautious throughout 2021 in regards to the pandemic, for example only planning on attending Gen Con 2021 virtually, even before the Delta variant of COVID-19 really took off.¹⁴⁹

The Golem of Redmond has taken nearly 20 years to reach its current form. With Adventure Paths still its beating heart, the golem now counts myriad product lines and even a whole science fiction expansion as part of its growing form. This is not to say that the occasional removal of material is still not necessary. Just this last month as of writing, Paizo announced a reduction in Pathfinder and Starfinder Society Scenarios in deference to its editorial team's workload.¹⁵⁰ Paizo also only has two main product lines supporting Pathfinder Second Edition rather than the three that churned out book after book in First Edition, though the Second Edition books are stouter for the change. More changes will be assuredly made before the construction of the golem rests at some indeterminable time in the future. Some day we will probably get a Pathfinder Third Edition and a Starfinder Second Edition, and with luck, beyond. Maybe we will even see another periodical out of the old magazine company. For now, though, the Paizo golem, strong, inclusive, and increasingly progressive, maintains its watch over Redmond.

¹⁴⁸ Bolleman, *Parting Clouds*, 26. Long-time contributors Jenny Jarzabski and Mike Kimmel were the two development hires, focusing on Starfinder Society and Pathfinder Society, respectively.

¹⁴⁹ "Paizo's Gen Con 2021 Update," Paizo, May 18, 2021.

¹⁵⁰ Erik Mona, "Organized Play Schedule Update," Paizo, July 26, 2021, <https://paizo.com/community/blog/v5748doyo6shr1>.