

UNTIL Superpowers Database II

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Notes: This contains an Appendix with the Revised information from USPD1.

The Review:

Reviewed By Gordon Feiner

The Upside:

This is the second book of prebuilt Champions Powers. It's about half as long by page count as the first USPD, however this one included a number of ideas and contributions from Hero Gamers on the Hero Discussion Boards. All told this book contains three-hundred and twenty-nine new power write-ups. Each of the powers comes with a description, system write-up and several ways to strengthen, weaken or create variations on the power.

The book is split in write-ups by Special Effect. Each section contains one or more of the following categories Offensive, Defensive, Movement, Sensory, and Miscellaneous Powers. A few sections contain other specialized categories. I'll cover each of the forty-one special effects, and one last catch-all category for just plain weird stuff below.

(A note on Offensive Powers - within the context of the USPD books an "offensive power" is a power that affects a target other than the Power's owner. In system terms powers that require an "attack action" to perform are considered Offensive Powers.)

Acid. Two offensive powers, one defensive power and one movement power. The offensive powers are creative alternatives to attacking someone without trying to inflict damage.

Air And Wind. Three offensive powers, one movement power, one sensory power and two miscellaneous powers. Again the offensive powers didn't focus on direct damage.

Animal. One offensive, one defensive and two movement powers. Nothing truly interesting here really.

Body Control. Six offensive, three defensive, one sensory, and three miscellaneous powers. Also, as a special subset we have Glue Powers, nine powers whose special effect is some form of sticky secretion. Glue Powers could almost get their own Special Effect outright, but I can see them fitting under Body Control easily enough as presented.

Chaos And Entropy. This is the first new section of Powers. Some of these powers are more suited to villains types, but not always. Fourteen offensive powers, Ruined Aim and Warped Body stand out as some of the more creative write-ups. Seven defensive powers, nothing too out of the ordinary here.

Three movement and three sensory powers. And four miscellaneous powers, Disregard Of Clutter I found to be a clever use of the Environmental Movement Talent.

Cosmic Energy. One defensive, two sensory, one movement and one miscellaneous power. Planetary Shield and True Cosmic Awareness are extremely expensive, even for Galactic Champions. Oddly enough, the least expensive power in this section, Reality Awareness, is either the most abusive or the silliest power I've ever seen, I'm not sure which.

Cyberkinesis. Two offensive, two sensory, and four miscellaneous powers. Be careful with Read Data, this simple power could have some balance issues in a game featuring hacking, computer security or similar things as more than just flavor. Copy Machine is a cool concept if played well.

Darkness. Four offensive and one defensive power. Confront Your Inner Self is good for fear based characters with darkness elements about them.

Density Alteration. Two offensive, two defensive and one sensory power. Too Heavy To Move is one of those powers that can be very unbalancing, but shows just how you can use the system to get a very specific effect.

Dimensional Manipulation. One offensive and one miscellaneous power. Distance Distortion Zone is a good example of an interesting use of Change Environment.

Earth And Stone. Two offensive, one defensive, two movement, one miscellaneous, and one Sand power. Pitfall is a clever use of the Usable As Attack advantage.

Electricity. Five offensive powers. Electrical Blocking is a good example of a very limited Variable Power Pool. Touch Off is interesting, but the suggestion in the description regarding Drain Charges should have been part of the base power.

Emotion Control. Three offensive and one defensive power. Crippling Depression is a cool use of Entangle, beyond that its standard fair.

Energy Manipulation. The second new category, this covers generic "energy" and not some specific effect. Things like "I shoot blue energy." Which is basic comic book stuff. Eleven offensive powers, which could be title "101 Uses For Energy Blast" as that's not only the primary Power used, but it's creatively used as well. Six defensive powers, two movement, two sensory, and three miscellaneous powers round out this group.

Fire And Heat. Four offensive, one defensive and one movement power. We have our first repeat construct here, Touch Off. Which goes to show just how much separate Effect and Mechanic are in Hero.

Force. One offensive and one miscellaneous power, simply adding a few tricks to suite of powers from the first USPD.

Gravity. Four offensive, one movement and one sensory power. Some good basic powers here.

Hyper Characteristics. The third new Power effect. This section is divided by Characteristic instead of the usual method. These powers emulate and give examples of what happens with a particular Characteristic is elevated to Superhuman level. One Hyper-Dexterity power, if you really want a suite of powers for Super Dexterity I suggest The Ultimate Speedster. One Hyper-Constitution power, I

thought there could have been more here. One Hyper-Body power. Seven Hyper-Intelligence powers, a nice wide range of Powers. One Hyper-Ego power, luckily The Ultimate Mentalist is out to expand on this area. Three Hyper-Presence powers, and going almost hand in hand are nine Hyper-Comeliness powers. The last two have some pretty cool ideas on how to handle interacting with the world around you (or not interacting in some cases).

Hypersenses. One offensive, two defensive and one sensory power.

Ice And Cold. Two offensive, one defensive and one miscellaneous power. Ice Slide Rescue is a good example of how reimagining the uses for some Advantages can make for some cool Powers.

Kinetic Energy. Five offensive powers, three of which focus on effects other than inflicting damage. One defensive and one movement power round out the selection.

Light. Two offensive and one defensive power, all fairly basic ideas.

Luck. Four offensive, three defensive, four sensory, and five miscellaneous powers. Luck powers are always fun to roleplay, I especially like the names the powers are given.

Matter Manipulation. Four offensive, one sensory, and three miscellaneous powers. The sensory power, Speaking Statues, is cool use of Retrocognition.

Mental And Psionic. Five offensive, two defensive, one sensory, and one miscellaneous power.

Precognition. One offensive, three defensive and two miscellaneous powers. Hand in hand with the previous section, this focuses entirely on seeing the future as a Special Effect. This particular Special Effect can always be unbalancing in a game, however the write-ups here are no more unbalancing than any other superpower, which is to say seeing the future doesn't have to be game breaking.

Shape Alteration. One defensive and one miscellaneous power. Creative, but not spectacular.

Size Alteration. One defensive power. Also included is a sub-category Special Effect, External Size Alteration, that work on changing the size of things besides the character. This has seven offensive, one defensive, one movement, and two miscellaneous powers.

Sleep And Dream. Four offensive powers, another set with a focus on non-damaging attacks.

Solar And Celestial. Two offensive and one miscellaneous power. Black Hole Body is a massive power, but cool.

Sonic. Three offensive and one movement power. Solid Sound is closer to a full concept than a single power, still a very cool idea.

Speedster. Four offensive, two defensive, one movement, one sensory, and two miscellaneous powers. Also, a special category called Whirling Powers is here. The Special Effect is that the character spins around, like a top for instance, to create their powers. There are six powers in this category.

Spirit Projection. This is the fourth and final new Special Effect in the book. This is the ability to project your spirit or life force outside of your own body for various effects. Eight offensive, two defensive, two sensory, and four miscellaneous powers are written up.

Stretching. One offensive, one defensive and one movement power.

Telekinetic. Five offensive, one defensive, one movement and three miscellaneous powers.

Teleportation. Four offensive, two defensive, and one miscellaneous power.

Time. One offensive, one defensive, one movement, one sensory, and two miscellaneous powers. Time Powers and Precognition powers are a good set to combine for temporal manipulators.

Vibration. One defensive power, wish there were more here.

Water. Three offensive, and two movement powers. Waveriding is an example of using a good idea to get a power not normally associated with the Special Effect, Flight in this case.

Weather. One offensive power, another section with a single power.

Wood And Plant. One defensive, one movement, and one miscellaneous power.

Miscellaneous. Nine powers that defy standard special effect categories, could become entirely new categories on their own if expanded, or are simply very generic.

Appendix. This is simply some powers from Volume 1 that needed updating to Fifth Edition Revised or a correction made to it. It was provided so that owners of the first volume didn't have to repurchase it when a Revised version was released. It's also available online as errata for those that don't want to purchase Volume 2.

The Downside:

No Index. There's a little side bar note on the last page that tells you the Index is located online at the Hero Games website, so it was deliberate act to exclude it in the printed copy. Probably for some rational reason like printing costs. Personally, I would have removed the descriptions from the Appendix Write-Ups since they were intended for someone who already owned the first volume to fit the Index in. Gaming books without indices make me cry.

The Otherside:

Being a big list of system write-ups, there's not too much for the Non-Hero Gamer. So I'll focus on the Non-Champions player. Add a few limitations (Incantations, Gestures, etc) and you have a book of spells for a Fantasy game. Or with almost no changes you have weird aliens running around, or future-technology for a Star Hero game. Or maybe some of the powers are strange mutations in a Post-Apocalypse game. In short, it's useful for any Hero Gamer.

The book is a big list of powers. From basic to complex and just plain out-of-the-box. Making it useful for beginners and Hero veterans alike. Whether you need some ideas, examples or just looking for something different this is an all around useful book.

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