



FUN IN A DUNGEON

Wrestling With MUD

Mainframe adventures allow the involvement of many players — in Multi-User Dungeon, up to 43 Novices, Warriors, Enchantresses, and so on, compete or co-operate to gather treasure and become omnipotent Wizards or Witches. Mainframe adventures also support large detailed scenarios: MUD locations include The Land, various caverns, a forest, a dragon island, The Sea and The Swamp, all of which may contain treasure, goblins and zombies. Six telephone lines permit connection to home micro players

Adventure games usually pit the player against the imagination of the writer, who determines certain actions that must be performed to complete the game. With MUD, the Multi-User Dungeon, many players, at their home computer terminals, can log into a mainframe machine to play an adventure game against each other.

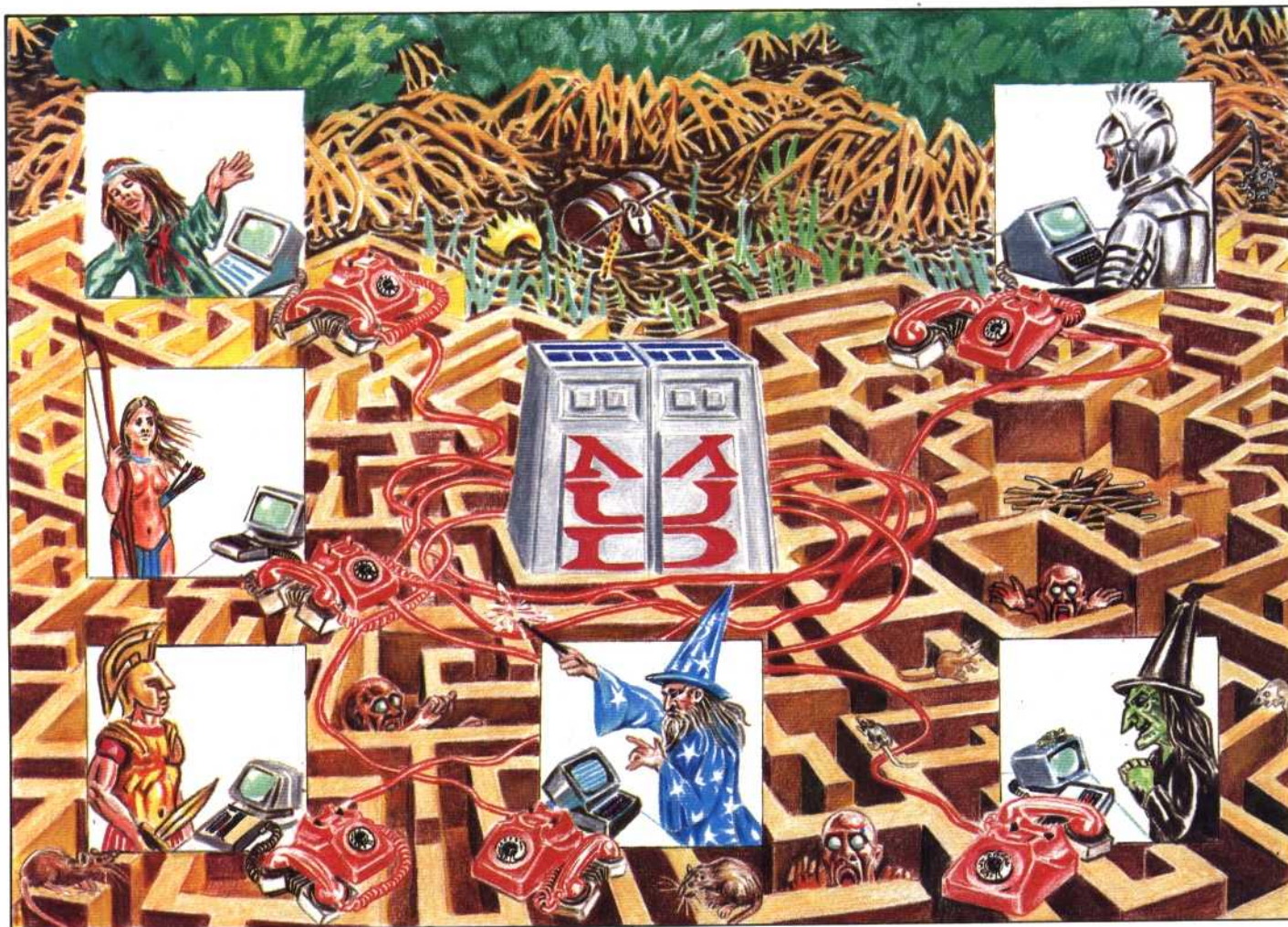
MUD is a real-time adventure where you meet other players, have conversations with them, ask their advice, join with them against a common enemy or fight them. They are not part of the program, they are playing the game at the same time as you, and so their actions affect yours.

MUD runs on a giant DEC10 computer at Essex University, and all you need to play it on your own microcomputer is a terminal emulator program, a telephone, a modem, and a Packet Switching System (PSS) account. A terminal

emulator program allows your micro to communicate with the mainframe via a telephone link. You may choose to write your own emulator or to buy one. It should ideally allow the screen to scroll, and give an 80-character line length. Micronet software is not suitable since it does not permit this. It is possible to use micros with less than 80-column displays, but this is awkward. There are some excellent packages available; for example, Termi and Communicator are ROM chips for the BBC Micro.

The modem needs to be able to communicate with British Telecom's PSS, and can be 300/300, 1200/75, or 1200/1200 baud. A Micronet acoustic coupler is quite satisfactory. PSS is a networking service that enables you to contact distant host computers, often for the cost of a local phone call. There is also a charge for data sent over the PSS. For details contact British Telecom.

The procedure for gaining access to the mainframe is straightforward. With the terminal



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