

LIS571 Organization of Information
Term Paper
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UESP: Serving the Information Needs of the Gaming Community

1. Introduction

The Unofficial Elder Scrolls Pages (UESP) (<http://www.uesp.net/wiki>) is an online database of information about The Elder Scrolls (TES) franchise of games developed by Bethesda Softworks. It was created in 1995 and contains over 17,000 articles. The database functions as a wiki with users able to post, edit, and discuss content in order to provide information about quests, characters, items, locations, skills, attributes, factions, etc. The producers of the wiki are the end-users themselves, ensuring accuracy as everyone who participates has a mutual interest in the correctness of the information.

The five games (and their associated expansions) covered by UESP are:

TES I: Arena

TES II: Daggerfall

TES III: Morrowind

 TES III: Morrowind: Tribunal

 TES III: Morrowind: Bloodmoon

TES IV: Oblivion

 TES IV: Oblivion: The Shivering Isles

 TES IV: Oblivion: Knights of the Nine

TES V: Skyrim

 TES V: Skyrim: Dawnguard [page exists, but expansion has not yet been released]

1.1 User Needs

When played without the aid of guides, mods (free and paid-content modifications created by third-party developers), and the console [here, the word “console” refers to the built-in utility where users can manually alter the game from within, not “console-gaming” such as an Xbox], the user is said to be playing a “vanilla” game - the way the developers intended. However, in some instances, a player may no longer wish to have a “vanilla” experience: 1) there are annoying or game-breaking glitches or “bugs”; 2) players want to change something in the game, 3) players want to know more about the history of the fictional universe they are exploring, 4) players want to know how to make money quickly, learn skills quickly, which quests are best taken at lower levels, etc; 5) players may have difficulty finding a particular item, character, or ruin and wish to know its location. In essence, there are many circumstances in which a player may turn to UESP to find information.

Though there are several resources on the Internet that can provide information about TES games, UESP is considered the most complete and up-to-date resource online.

2. The UESP

2.1 Structure and Layout

The UESP employs good document design¹ - the pages are easy to read, clear as to their purpose, and makes extensive use of cross-references. The Main Page for UESP contains several important elements: a description with logo, a sidebar with a search function and content links (which is present on the left-hand side of all pages), “Latest News”, “Current Featured Article”, “Current Featured Image”, and “Did you Know...?”

Individual articles (aka “entries”) are presented in a consistent format. At the top of each page is the heading in the format **Game title:[Name]** (i.e. Skyrim:Erandur). Below the heading is the hierarchy (i.e. Skyrim: People: Erandur). At the very bottom of the page, one can find the indexing terms (i.e. Skyrim-Dunmer, Skyrim-Priest, etc).

If for a character, location, unique item, or quest, the article displays a table of contents on the left side of the page with a data box on the right. In between and below is the written portion of the article. The data box may indicate all the information that is needed, but the text of the article puts that data into context. If for a series of items (such as the entire set of iron weapons and armor) or creatures, the article displays a table of contents on the left side below which are tables of the various items/creatures and their attributes, sometimes including a brief description. The tables can be arranged according to users’ needs (i.e. if a user needs to find which armor is cheapest, a clickable icon allows the table to be changed from being organized alphabetically to being organized according to “value”).

The numerous cross-references used in the database are best illustrated with an example. For the article “Skyrim:Erandur”, the following information can be found:

Erandur, also known as Casimir, is a [Dunmer priest](#) of [Mara](#) investigating the nightmares plaguing [Dawnstar](#). While investigating, the player is directed to Erandur, who is also looking into the problem. This will start the quest [Waking Nightmare](#). He wears a set of [hooded monk robes](#) with a pair of [boots](#). He carries a leveled [mace](#) of the best possible quality and two leveled [potions of healing](#). He also carries a [torch](#), a [belted tunic](#) and the [key](#) to [Nightcaller Temple](#). He does not wield any weapons, but relies on three spells, specifically [lesser ward](#), [firebolt](#) and [flames](#). [taken from <http://www.uesp.net/wiki/skyrim:erandur>]

Each of the underlined text segments can be used to retrieve information on the selected topic. For instance, if the user wanted to know every instance of a Dunmer in TES V: Skyrim, one only need click “Dunmer” in the article. (If one wished to know every instance of a Dunmer in all TES games, however, the user would need to query “Arena:Dunmer”, “Daggerfall:Dunmer”,

“Morrowind:Dunmer”, “Oblivion:Dunmer”, and “Skyrim:Dunmer” separately; there is no straightforward way to find the information otherwise.)

Since the content of the site is user-generated, some sections are incomplete for a period of time after each game is released. For instance, TES IV: Oblivion was released on March 20, 2006, so all pages relating to that game have been completed (this is also true for games TES I-III). TES V: Skyrim was released on November 11, 2011. As such, some articles are nonexistent or remain unfinished and will remain that way until users determine a need for the information (hence the reason “Skyrim:Dawnguard” is incomplete - it hasn’t yet been released).

2.2 The Entity-Relationship Conceptual Data Schema

Entity	Relationship	Value [bolded items indicate form value must take] Alpha = letter characters only Alphanumeric = letters and numbers Numeric = numbers only Repeatable = can be listed more than once Singular = can only have one value assigned
Person/Character (UESP uses “People” here) [I use “character” to denote sentient entities - this is because not all “characters” are technically persons - some may be creatures; for an example of this, see Quest Example below]	<has name> <has race> <has gender> <located in> <has quest prerequisite> <has quest completion prerequisite> <has faction> <has quest> (optional) <is base level>	Name - one or more words, may use punctuation, alpha “Dunmer”, “Bosmer”, “Altmer”, “Orc”, “Khajit”, “Argonian”, “Redguard”, “Imperial”, “Breton”, “Nord” ; may also include: “Vampire”, “Werewolf” Male/Female Location name, Repeatable, alpha Quest class: Quest name, alpha, singular Yes/No Repeatable, alpha or alphanumeric, no spaces between words Repeatable, alpha Formula, numeric range (i.e. Formula: PCx1.5 (range: 6-50) - means that, no matter the formula,

	<p><is marriageable> <is follower> <has quest prerequisite> <has quest completion prerequisite> <is trainer> <trains skill> <trains skill level> <has quest prerequisite> <is merchant> <is merchant type> <updates quest> (optional) <owns shop> (optional) <has spouse> (optional) <has descendent> (optional) <has ancestor> (optional) <has base id> <has ref id> <has base health> <has base stamina> <has base magicka> <has skills> <has attributes> [n/a to Skyrim] <is essential> [can't die] <has class> <has morality> <has aggression> <in game></p>	<p>the level cannot be less than 6 or more than 50) [PC = Player Character] Yes/No Yes/No Quest class:Quest name, alpha Yes/No Yes/No Singular, alpha, dependent on skill tree of particular game (i.e. “blade” skill of Oblivion vs. “one-handed” skill of Skyrim) “Common”, “Expert”, “Master” Quest class:Quest name, alpha Yes/No Alpha, dependent on game Quest class:Quest name, alpha Singular, alpha Singular, alpha Repeatable, alpha Repeatable, alpha Alphanumeric, eight characters Alphanumeric, eight characters Numeric OR Formula, results in number of 1-4 digits Numeric OR Formula, results in number of 1-4 digits Numeric OR Formula, results in number of 1-4 digits Repeatable, dependent on skill tree of game, alpha Repeatable, dependent on attributes of game Yes/No Singular, dependent on sociology of game, alpha “Any Crime” OR “No Crime” “Aggressive” OR “Unaggressive” Repeatable: “Arena”, “Daggerfall”, “Morrowind”, “Oblivion”, “Skyrim”, and associated expansions (alpha)</p>
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Quest	<p><has name></p> <p><has quest class></p> <p><has level></p> <p><has boss></p> <p><has character></p> <p><has enemy></p> <p><has reward></p> <p><is given by></p> <p><has prerequisite></p> <p><has quest completion prerequisite></p> <p><has quest completion condition></p> <p><leads to quest></p> <p><can be failed></p> <p><has ref id></p> <p><has objective></p> <p><has optional objective></p> <p><is completed></p> <p><has bug></p> <p><in game></p>	<p>One or more words, alpha, may include punctuation</p> <p>Singular, alpha, dependent on game</p> <p>Numeric, 1-99, OR “none”</p> <p>Singular, alpha</p> <p>Repeatable, alpha</p> <p>Repeatable, alpha</p> <p>Repeatable, alpha/alphanumeric</p> <p>Repeatable, alpha</p> <p>Quest class:Quest name (alpha), and/or Level (numeric, 1-99), OR “none”</p> <p>Yes/No</p> <p>Condition = qualifier, alpha/alphanumeric, “condition” can be character, quest, location, etc; “qualifier” can be alive, dead, visited, friendly, etc.</p> <p>Quest class:Quest name, alpha, OR “none”</p> <p>Yes/No</p> <p>Alphanumeric, standardized across games [i.e. “MG08” for Quest: College of Winterhold: The Eye of Magnus - where “MG” is synonymous with “Mages’ Guild”; guilds dealing with mages in each game are designated as “MG” whether called a “mages’ guild” or not]</p> <p>Repeatable, alpha/alphanumeric, may have punctuation</p> <p>Repeatable, alpha/alphanumeric, may have punctuation</p> <p>“Objective:_____”, Singular, alpha/alphanumeric, may have punctuation</p> <p>Repeatable, alpha (may be in paragraph form)</p> <p>“Arena”, “Daggerfall”, “Morrowind”, “Oblivion”, “Skyrim”, and associated expansions (alpha)</p>
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<p>PLACES (aka LOCATIONS) City</p>	<p><is location type></p> <p><in region></p> <p><has shop></p> <p><has character></p> <p><has leader></p> <p><in game></p> <p><associated with quest></p> <p><starts quest></p> <p><updates quest></p>	<p>Alpha, dependent on game (i.e. City, Ruin, Cave, etc)</p> <p>Singular, one or more words, alpha</p> <p>Repeatable, alpha</p> <p>Repeatable, alpha</p> <p>Title (dependent on political structure of game - i.e. “Count” vs. “Jarl”), Character Name (one or more words, may have punctuation)</p> <p>“Arena”, “Daggerfall”, “Morrowind”, “Oblivion”, “Skyrim”, and associated expansions (alpha)</p> <p>Quest class:Quest name, Repeatable, alpha</p> <p>Quest class:Quest name, Repeatable, alpha</p> <p>Quest class:Quest name, Repeatable, alpha</p>
<p>Settlement/Town/ Stronghold</p>	<p><has name></p> <p><has ref id></p> <p><has character></p> <p><starts quest></p> <p><updates quest></p> <p><is level></p> <p><in game></p>	<p>Singular, alpha, one or more words</p> <p>Alphanumeric, eight characters</p> <p>Repeatable, names consist of one or more words, may use punctuation, alpha</p> <p>Quest class:Quest name, Repeatable, alpha</p> <p>Quest class:Quest name, Repeatable, alpha</p> <p>Numeric, 1-99</p> <p>“Arena”, “Daggerfall”, “Morrowind”, “Oblivion”, “Skyrim”, and associated expansions (alpha)</p>
<p>Ruin/Cave/Fort/ Mine</p>	<p><has name></p> <p><has ref id></p> <p><is level></p> <p><is type></p> <p><in game></p>	<p>Singular, alpha, one or more words</p> <p>Alphanumeric, eight characters</p> <p>Numeric 1-99</p> <p>Singular, alpha, dependent on game</p> <p>“Arena”, “Daggerfall”, “Morrowind”, “Oblivion”, “Skyrim”, and associated expansions (alpha)</p>

	<p><has faction> <has character> <has enemy> <has boss> <locked to quest> [cannot be accessed until a certain time] <starts quest> <updates quest></p>	<p>Repeatable, alpha/alphanumeric Repeatable, Character Name Repeatable, alpha Singular, alpha Quest class:Quest name, Singular, alpha Quest class:Quest name, Repeatable, alpha Quest class:Quest name, Repeatable, alpha</p>
Game	<p><has name> <has quest> <has location> <has character> <has skill> <has attribute> <has race> <has disease> <has creature> <has crafting> <has faction> <released on> <set in></p>	<p>“Arena”, “Daggerfall”, “Morrowind”, “Oblivion”, “Skyrim”, and associated expansions (alpha) Repeatable, alpha/alphanumeric Names of Cities, Forts, Ruins, Caves, Mines, Regions, alpha, repeatable Repeatable, one or more words, may have punctuation Repeatable, alpha, dependent on skill tree of game Repeatable, alpha, dependent on game (n/a for Skyrim) “Dunmer”, “Bosmer”, “Altmer”, “Orc”, “Khajit”, “Argonian”, “Redguard”, “Imperial”, “Breton”, “Nord”; may also include: “Vampire”, “Werewolf” Reapeatable, alpha, dependent on game Repeatable, alpha, dependent on game Repeatable, alpha, dependent on game Repeatable, alpha, dependent on game Day, Month, Year (continent) [i.e.: 20 Mar 2006 (NA)] Repeatable, alpha</p>

	<p><has time period></p> <p><has expansion></p>	<p>Era number, “e”, Era Year (i.e. 4E 201)</p> <p>Alpha, dependent on game, includes expansions as well as downloadable content (DLC)</p>
<p>Creatures/ Monsters</p>	<p><is type></p> <p><has faction></p> <p><has level></p> <p><carries item></p> <p><has base health></p> <p><has resistance></p> <p><has soul></p> <p><has ref id></p> <p><attacks with></p>	<p>Singular, alpha</p> <p>Repeatable, alpha/alphanumeric</p> <p>Numeric, 1-99</p> <p>Alchemy ingredient and/or loot, alpha with percentage</p> <p>Numeric OR Formula, depending on game</p> <p>“Poison”, “Magic”, “Shock”, “Frost”, “Fire”, repeatable, alpha with numeric point qualifier</p> <p>“Petty”, “Lesser”, “Common”, “Greater”, “Grand”</p> <p>Alphanumeric, eight characters</p> <p>Repeatable, dependent on game, alpha with numeric point qualifier</p>
<p>ITEMS Weapons</p>	<p><has material></p> <p><has name></p> <p><deals base damage></p> <p><is enchanted></p> <p> <enchanted with></p> <p><has reach> (n/a for bows/staves)</p> <p><has speed> (n/a for bows/staves)</p> <p><has stagger> (n/a for staves)</p> <p><has weight></p> <p><has value></p> <p><can be crafted></p> <p> <has ingredients></p> <p><located in></p>	<p>Singular, alpha, dependent on game</p> <p>Singular, alpha, one or more words</p> <p>Numeric, 1-999</p> <p>Yes/No</p> <p> Repeatable, alpha with numeric point qualifier, dependent on game</p> <p>Numeric 0-2</p> <p>Numeric 0-2</p> <p>Numeric 0-2</p> <p>Numeric 0-99</p> <p>Numeric 0-99999</p> <p>Yes/No</p> <p> Repeatable, alpha with numeric Qualifier</p> <p>Alpha, one or more words, may be Place, Creature, or Character</p>
<p>Armor/Clothing</p>	<p><has material></p> <p><has class></p>	<p>Singular, alpha, dependent on game</p> <p>“Helmet”, “Boots”, “Gauntlets”, “Shield”, “Cuirass”, “Greaves”, “Armor” [Note: “Cuirass” and “Greaves” appear in TES I - IV; V</p>

	<p><has name> <is enchanted> <enchanted with></p> <p><has weight> <has value> <has rating> <has ref id> <located in></p>	<p>combines them into “Armor”]</p> <p>Singular, alpha, one or more words Yes/No Repeatable, alpha with numeric point qualifier, dependent on game Numeric 0-99 Numeric 0-99999 Numeric 0-9999 Alphanumeric, eight characters Alpha, one or more words, may be Place, Creature, or Character</p>
Food/Ingredients/ Potions	<p><has name> <has value> <has weight> <has effect></p> <p><has ref id> <can be crafted > <has ingredients></p> <p><has level></p>	<p>Singular, alpha, one or more words Numeric 0-99999 Numeric 0-99 Repeatable, alpha with numeric point qualifier Alphanumeric, eight characters Yes/No Repeatable, alpha with numeric qualifier Numeric 0-99</p>
Books/Notes/ Scrolls	<p><has ref id> <has name> [in game, this is referred to as “title”] <has author></p> <p><has description> <located in></p> <p><has weight> <has value></p>	<p>Alphanumeric, eight characters Alpha, one or more words</p> <p>Alpha, one or more words, may be Character Name, may have punctuation Alpha, one sentence Alpha, one or more words, may be Place, Creature, or Character Numeric 0-99 Numeric 0-9999</p>
Miscellaneous/ Keys/Soul Gems	<p><has name> <has ref id> <has weight> <has value> <located in></p>	<p>Singular, alpha, one or more words Alphanumeric, eight characters Numeric 0-99 Numeric 0-9999 Alpha, one or more words, may be Place, Creature, or Character</p>
Faction	<p><has name> <has ref id> <in game></p>	<p>Alpha, dependent on game Alphanumeric, eight characters “Arena”, “Daggerfall”,</p>

	<has quest> <has character> <located in> <has leader> (optional)	“Morrowind”, “Oblivion”, “Skyrim” Quest class: Quest name, alpha, repeatable Repeatable, alpha Repeatable, alpha Alpha (typically only used for guilds)
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2.2.1 Three Examples for Characters, Quests, Places:

People/Character Example

Erandur <has name> Erandur
 <has race> Dunmer
 <has gender> Male
 <has quest> Daedric Quest:Waking Nightmare
 <is follower> Yes
 <has quest prerequisite> Daedric Quest:Waking Nightmare
 <has quest completion prerequisite> Yes
 <has quest completion condition> Erandur = Alive
 <is marriageable> No
 <has base level> PCx1.5 (range=6-50)
 <located in> Dawnstar: Windpeak Inn
 <located in> Nightcaller Temple
 <has quest prerequisite> Daedric Quest: Waking Nightmare
 <has quest completion prerequisite> Yes
 <has quest completion condition> Erandur = Alive
 <has faction> DA16VaerminaDreamFaction
 <has faction> PotentialFollowerFaction
 <has class> Priest
 <has ref id> 00024280
 <has base id> 0002427D
 <is essential> Yes
 <has skill> Restoration
 <has skill> Speech
 <has skill> Alchemy
 <has skill> Conjuraction
 <has skill> Smithing
 <has morality> No Crime
 <has aggressiveness> Unaggressive
 <has base health> 100+(PC-1.5)x12.5
 <has base magicka> 50
 <has base stamina> 50+(PC-1.5)x10
 <has attributes> n/a

<is trainer> No
 <is merchant> No
 <in game> Skyrim

Hierarchy: **Skyrim: People: Erandur**

Indexing Terms: Skyrim-NPCs [NPC = Non-playable Character]
 Skyrim-Dunmer
 Skyrim-Dunmer-Male
 Skyrim-Male NPCs
 Skyrim-Priest
 Skyrim-Leveled NPCs
 Skyrim-Essential NPCs
 Skyrim-Follower NPCs
 Skyrim-No Crime
 Skyrim-Factions-DA16VaerminaDreamFaction
 Skyrim-Factions-PotentialFollowerFaction
 Skyrim-Unconfirmed Bugs

Quest Example

Hail Sithis! <has name> Hail Sithis!
 <in game> Skyrim
 <has ref id> DB11
 <has quest class> Dark Brotherhood
 <has level> none
 <has boss> none
 <has character> Amuand Motierre
 <has character> Babette
 <has character> Nazir
 <has character> The Night Mother
 [This is an instance where “Character” is not a “person” per se, but the
 creature calling itself “The Night Mother” - see note for Entity - Person]
 <has enemy> Sailor
 <has enemy> Penitus Oculatus Agent
 <has enemy> Commander Maro
 <has enemy> Captain Avidius
 <has enemy> Lieutenant Salvarus
 <has enemy> Solitude Guard
 <has enemy> Emperor Titus Mede II
 <has reward> 20,000 gold
 <has reward> Dawnstar Sanctuary
 <is given by> The Night Mother
 <has prerequisite> Dark Brotherhood:Death Incarnate
 <leads to quest> Dark Brotherhood:Where You Hang Your Enemy’s Head
 <leads to quest> Dark Brotherhood:The Dark Brotherhood Forever
 <has objective> Talk to Nazir
 <has objective> Talk to Amaund Motierre
 <has objective> Board the Katariah

<has optional objective> Kill Commander Maro
 <has objective> Kill the Emperor!
 <has objective> Report to Amaund Motierre
 <has optional objective> Kill Amaund Motierre
 <has objective> Retrieve the payment
 <has objective> Report to Nazir
 <is completed> Objective:Report to Nazir
 <can be failed> No

Hierarchy: **Skyrim: Quests: Dark Brotherhood: Hail Sithis!**

Indexing Terms: Skyrim-Quests-Dark Brotherhood
 Skyrim-Quests
 Skyrim-Unconfirmed Bugs
 Skyrim Quest Stubs

Places Example

Windhelm <has name> Windhelm
 <is location type> City
 <in game> Skyrim
 <in region> Eastmarch
 <has leader> Jarl Ulfric Stormcloak
 <has shop> Blacksmith Quarters
 <has shop> Calixto's House of Curiosities
 <has shop> The White Phial
 <has shop> Sadri's Used Wares
 <has inn> Candlehearth Hall
 <has inn> New Gnisis Cornerclub
 <has temple> Hall of the Dead
 <has temple> Temple of Talos
 <has character> Aventus Aretino
 <has character> Aval Atheron
 <has character> Viola Girodano
 [There are another 58 entries for <has character>]
 <has house> Aretino Residence
 <has house> Argonian Assemblage
 <has house> House of Clan Shatter-Shield
 [There are another 9 entries for <has house>]
 <has building> Clan Shatter-Shield Office
 <has building> East Empire Company
 <has building> Palace of the Kings
 <has building> Warehouse
 <has building> Windhelm Stables
 <has related quest> Dark Brotherhood:Innocence Lost
 <has related quest> Windhelm:Blood on the Ice
 <has related quest> Windhelm:Repairing the Phial
 <has related quest> Windhelm:Rise in the East
 <has related quest> Civil War:Battle for Windhelm

<has miscellaneous quest> Find the Thalmor Assassin
 <has quest prerequisite> Main Quest:Dipolomatic Immunity
 <has quest completion prerequisite> Yes
 <has quest completion condition> Malborn = alive
 <has miscellaneous quest> Quest all Beggars Have
 <has miscellaneous quest> Gather Wheat
 [There are another 15 entries for <has miscellaneous quest>

Hierarchy: **Skyrim: Places: Cities: Windhelm**

Indexing Terms: Skyrim-Places-Cities
 Skyrim-Places

3. Indexing, Hierarchy, and Searching

3.1 Language

The UESP uses a controlled vocabulary in order to provide consistency across games. This vocabulary was created by Bethesda Softworks and can be accessed through the Construction Set (a.k.a. “Creation Kit” for TES V: Skyrim). The Construction Set is a software tool provided by the developers that allows users to directly modify the game without relying on the developers. This allows for infinite changes. In order to make UESP user-friendly, the vocabulary (with very few exceptions) is applicable to everything in every game, from characters to quests, to the type of ore a character is mining. Only rarely do the developers change the name of a particular value or eliminate it altogether (for instance, “attributes” such as Strength, Endurance, Willpower, Intelligence, Luck, Agility, and Personality were eliminated in TES V: Skyrim after appearing in TES I-IV).

Due to the controlled vocabulary and the rarity of exceptions, the index language is easy to follow. At the top level, there are five categories in which a page can be indexed: “Arena”, “Daggerfall”, “Morrowind”, “Oblivion”, and “Skyrim”. This identifies the game in which the item, character, quest, etc, appears. If an entity appears in more than one game, it is indexed for each time it appears.

Example: The character Sinderion appears in both Oblivion and Skyrim, so there are two articles: “Oblivion:Sinderion” and “Skyrim:Sinderion” with the related article as the note, “See also Sinderion (Oblivion)/(Skyrim)” that takes the user to the related article.

“Oblivion:Sinderion” is indexed as:

- Oblivion-NPCs
- Oblivion-Altmer
- Oblivion-Altmer-Male
- Oblivion-Male NPCs
- Oblivion-Alchemist
- Oblivion-Level 30 NPCs
- Oblivion-Merchants

- Oblivion-Trainers
- Oblivion-Ingredient Merchants
- Oblivion-Potion Merchants
- Oblivion-Apparatus Merchants
- Oblivion-Merchants-Novice
- Oblivion-Factions-Skingrad Citizen
- Oblivion-Permanent Corpses

“Skyrim:Sinderion” is indexed as:

- Skyrim-Creatures-All
- Skyrim-Dead Creatures
- Skyrim-Factions-Creature Faction
- Skyrim-Factions-Skeleton Faction
- Skyrim Creature Stubs

However, it is worth noting that the indexing for the Skyrim article on Sinderion, “Skyrim-Dead Creatures” does not match the hierarchy of the article: “Skyrim: Creatures: Undead”. The definition for “Undead” on UESP is “...spirits, reanimated skeletons, and reanimated corpses”. For this article to be classified under “Undead”, the definition should have been changed to: “...spirits, stationary and reanimated skeletons and corpses” due to the fact that Sinderion’s skeleton is not reanimated; it is a stationary object in the world.

3.1.1 Exhaustivity and Specificity²

The indexing is very exhaustive - individual entries are indexed in such a way as to provide the user with as many relevant articles as possible when searching. Whether searching for all members of a particular race (search “Altmer” to find all High Elves in every game) or all instances of an iron sword (there are thousands), it can be done.

Searching can yield very specific results as well, if the user understands how articles are titled. If the user knows the subject to be searched (i.e. Erandur) and knows in which game the subject appears (i.e. Skyrim), the article can be immediately accessed (Skyrim:Erandur).

3.2 Hierarchy³

The hierarchy of UESP makes use of the elemental concepts⁴ indicated in the Construction Sets developed by Bethesda Softworks. The specific characters, items, quests, etc, vary between games, but every game follows the same hierarchy:

[Game Title]
- Creatures
-- Animals
-- Daedra
-- Dead

- Monsters
- Passive Creatures
- Undead
- Factions
 - Joinable Factions (aka Guilds)
 - NPC Factions
 - Other Factions
- Items
 - Ammunition
 - Armor
 - Clothing
 - Jewelry
 - Books
 - Notes
 - Scrolls
 - Enchanted Items
 - Ingredients
 - Miscellaneous Items
 - Clutter
 - Keys
 - Soul Gems
 - Potions
 - Quest Items
 - Unique Items
 - Weapons
- Magic
 - Alchemy
 - Food
 - Effects
 - Ingredients
 - Potions
 - Artifacts
 - Effects
 - Enchanting
 - Guilds
 - Scrolls
 - Spells
- Maps
 - Local Maps
 - World Maps
- People
 - Cities
 - Towns
 - Other Locations
 - Wanderers
 - Overworld/Wilderness

- Places
 - Camps
 - Caves
 - Cities
 - Daedric Shrines
 - Landmarks
 - Mines
 - Settlements/Towns
 - Ruins
 - Forts
 - Other Ruins (varies according to game; i.e. Nordic Ruins in Skyrim vs. Ayleid Ruins in Oblivion)
- Quests
 - Quests by Type
 - Faction Quest (factions differ by game)
 - Main Quest
 - Miscellaneous/Activities
 - Other Quests
 - Daedric Quests
 - Side Quests
 - Quests by Location
 - Main Cities
 - Settlements

3.3 Searching/Browsing

There are three ways to search for articles within UESP: “Go”, which takes users directly to an article if the user knows the title of the article (i.e. typing “Skyrim:Erاندur” and clicking “Go” takes the user directly to the entry on the character Erاندur); “Search”, which allows users to search within the database for an entry; and “More Options”, which takes users to the “Advanced Search” feature. The “Advanced Search” allows users to search within specific games, expansions, lore (history), help, and the discussion pages (where users debate what content to post). Users can also use Boolean queries in the “Advanced Search” by checking a box beneath the text box. When search results are provided by UESP, several lines of text are given to provide context. This allows users to decide whether the search result is relevant or not.

There are categories that can be searched and browsed, similarly to Yahoo! Categories. The categories can be browsed in a hierarchical fashion (“Category:Categories”) or users can search within the categories for articles (“Special:Categories”).

3.3.1 Comments on Searching

Searching UESP can be tricky for several reasons. First, if one does not understand how the three search features work, it may cause extra work on the part of the user. The main way users

search is to type a topic in the text box and hit the “enter” key, which defaults to the “Go” function. This is clunky since “Go” is meant to go directly to an entry. The problem is, if a user were to type “Erandur” in the text box and hit the “enter” key, the search will not take users to the entry on the character Erandur. Rather, a page would be displayed showing possible search matches, one of which is titled “Skyrim:Erandur”. This is unfortunately also true were a user to click “Search” rather than “Go”. The reason for this is because articles are titled a specific way which is not readily apparent to casual users (it is explained in the “help files” section of the site). [Note: pages are titled similarly to the hierarchy, but not exactly so; this can cause confusion. Example: the article on Erandur is titled “Skyrim:Erandur” but the hierarchy is “Skyrim: People: Erandur”. If the user enters “Skyrim:Erandur”, the page will be found directly, but not if the user enters “Skyrim: People: Erandur”.]

Another reason the search feature is problematic is because of the lack of consistency (even though the terminology is consistent, due to the high number of users, pages are not created in a consistent manner). A user cannot get directly to the entry on Erandur by only typing in “Erandur”, but if one were to type “Paarthurnax” into the text box and hit the “enter” key, the database takes the user directly to the article regarding the quest titled “Paarthurnax” (titled as “Skyrim:Paarthurnax” with the hierarchy “Skyrim: Quests: Paarthurnax”). Additionally, “Paarthurnax” can either be a character or a quest. Ideally, UESP should have directed the user to a disambiguation⁵ page where the user could choose which form of “Paarthurnax” is desired. To be fair, however, at the top of the page for “Skyrim:Paarthurnax”, there is a link that reads: “For the dragon Paarthurnax, see Paarthurnax (dragon)” (which is titled “Skyrim:Paarthurnax (dragon)” with the hierarchy “Skyrim: Creatures: Monsters: Paarthurnax (dragon)”.

The categories are useful for browsing but finding them can be challenging. The sidebar does not include a link for “Categories” and there are a limited number of ways to find them: 1) directly typing in the search box “category:categories” or “special:categories”; and 2) clicking the “category” link on the bottom of an article (which is only seen if the user scrolls all the way down past the bugs, notes, and citations)

Unlike some other user-generated-content sites such as Wikipedia, UESP does not have a group of people who review articles prior to posting them. The user community is expected to police itself and if errors or inconsistencies are found, only users can fix them. While it is enough to ensure accuracy of content, it is not enough to ensure search consistency. A way for this to be improved would be to set a standard (i.e. if “Skyrim:Paarthurnax” can be accessed by searching “Paarthurnax” then “Skyrim:Erandur” should be able to be accessed by searching “Erandur”). Another quality control measure would be to select a group of users to serve as a “board” that reviews page creation and edits prior to the page being posted.

4. Conclusion

The UESP effectively serves the information needs of the gaming community but sometimes requires perseverance and patience in order to do so. I admit that, prior to this assignment, I found searching the database mildly frustrating but through this assignment, have learned various techniques to get the most out of UESP, resulting in spending less time jumping from page to

page in a haphazard fashion. Consistency could definitely be improved upon by setting certain quality standards and by creating a “board” that reviews page creation before pages are posted to the site, but ultimately, the database is very successful in providing the information users need in an organized way.

References:

The Unofficial Elder Scrolls Pages. (2012, April 30). Retrieved from <http://www.uesp.net/wiki>

Soergel, D. (1985). *Organizing information: Principles of data base and retrieval systems*. San Francisco, CA: Elsevier.

Citations:

1. Lecture notes, page 123 (Good Document Design)
2. Soergel, D. (1985). *Organizing information: Principles of data base and retrieval systems*. San Francisco, CA: Elsevier. (Chapter 16 - Exhaustivity and Specificity).
3. Soergel, D. (1985). *Organizing information: Principles of data base and retrieval systems*. San Francisco, CA: Elsevier. (Chapter 14 - Hierarchies).
4. Lecture notes, Week 9 (Elemental Concepts/Semantic Factoring)
5. Lecture notes, page 115 (Word-Sense Disambiguation)