

Miskatonic Repository FAQ

– 4 March 2021 –

Written by Nick Brooke.

Modifications for Miskatonic Repository by Allan Carey

A lot of what you are seeking in this FAQ is answered in the Miskatonic Repository Guidelines, which can be found here:

<https://support.drivethrurpg.com/hc/en-us/articles/115005751243-Chaosium-Miskatonic-Repository->

and here:

<https://support.drivethrurpg.com/hc/en-us/articles/115005848483-Miskatonic-Repository-Additional-Guidelines>

But if that doesn't have the answers, read on!

Q: What rights to the contents of my product do I retain and what rights are transferred to Chaosium when I use the Miskatonic Repository?

A: You retain the copyright for any original material you create and publish through the Miskatonic Repository. The only rights transferred to Chaosium are the rights to post and sell your content on the Repository, per the program's terms of use. If Chaosium wants to do anything else with your content, a new, separate agreement with you is required.

Please note that Chaosium maintains ownership of the IP it provides for your use on the Repository, including trademarks, game rules, settings, characters, concepts, plots, storylines, and so on. Chaosium grants you the use of this material only for works sold on the Repository. You must remove all Chaosium-owned content from your work if you later adapt it for other uses.

Q: In addition to posting on the Miskatonic Repository, are we free to publish, distribute, or sell our works elsewhere?

A: No. According to the OBS EULA: "Except for short promotional excerpts used to promote your Work, you may not display, recreate, publish, distribute or sell your Work (or derivatives thereof) outside of the Program administered on OBS websites or through other platforms or channels authorized or offered by Moon Design/Chaosium."

Q: Do I have to include the Miskatonic Repository Logo on the cover of my work?

A: Yes. You must include the unmodified Miskatonic Repository logo on the front cover of your title, displayed clearly. You also need to include the logo in the preview image of your product page in the Miskatonic Repository on DriveThruRPG.

Q: I want to publish something for *Call of Cthulhu*, but I'm not sure what will be best. Should I be aiming to write scenarios, or sourcebooks, or something else?

A: We want more people to write and share scenarios for our tabletop roleplaying games; that's really why the Miskatonic Repository was set up. All works should feature lots of useful stuff for players and for Keepers looking for material to run for their players. Ideally, all community content should be

thematically linked to playable content, rather than dry academic tracts or narrative fiction or other non-playable content.

Q: What are the best type of scenarios to create and the best level of detail to offer when creating scenarios?

A: The best type of scenario for you to write is the type of scenario that you enjoy running as a Keeper or enjoy playing. Avoid clichés. Predictability is the enemy of suspense, so stay away from well-trodden plots, scenes, and tropes. If you've run into a scene or conflict before in Mythos games or movies or fiction, other people have, too.

Long, complex scenarios and campaigns can be difficult to write and can call for a team of designers and lots of playtesters. This may be within your reach as a creator or project manager, but, equally, it may not. Work to your strengths and available resources.

When in doubt, look at professional scenarios you have enjoyed running or playing, or just reading, and use them as models for your own work. Playtesting your drafts will help you identify gaps in the information you provide the Keeper and, more importantly, ways in which the players may stray from the scenario's expected narrative and scenes.

Q: Can I reference things from Chaosium's *Call of Cthulhu* products in my work?

A: Yes. You can use the names of people, places, species, deities, and so on, along with plotlines or themes, from Chaosium's published 7th Edition *Call of Cthulhu* books in your Miskatonic Repository work: that's the point of the community content program!

There are exceptions, as detailed in the Miskatonic Repository Guidelines. You cannot, for example, use Mythos elements we publish under license from certain authors, such as Ramsey Campbell and Brian Lumley.

Check the Miskatonic Repository Guidelines for more specifics on limitations. Check the copyright statement in your Chaosium product to determine ownership and copyright for material included in each book.

Q: OK, so does that mean I can just copy text from a Chaosium product into my work?

A: No. Please do not copy or directly quote text from Chaosium books. That sort of use requires specific permission, so you are better off providing page references to the Chaosium books where the details can be found, rather than copying or quoting text.

Q: Can we use rules or monsters from supplemental *Call of Cthulhu* books, such as *Down Darker Trails* or *Terror Australis*?

A: Yes. Your work on the Repository can use most rules and setting materials from the 7th Edition *Call of Cthulhu* books published by, and more importantly owned by, Chaosium. Exceptions are detailed in the Miskatonic Repository Guidelines. Check the copyright statement in each Chaosium product to determine ownership and copyright.

Q: Same question for licensed products: can we use rules or monsters from licensed *Call of Cthulhu* products, such as *Harlem Unbound* or Mythos books published in the Chaosium fiction line? How about *Call of Cthulhu* products published by Chaosium licensees, like Golden Goblin or Asmodee?

A: No. You may not use material included in game products Chaosium publishes under license, such as *Harlem Unbound*, or the Mythos novels or short works we publish as part of our fiction program. You also cannot use material from *Call of Cthulhu* products released by other publishers under license from Chaosium, with the exception of *Cthulhu Invictus* published by Golden Goblin Press.

Q: Can I copy things I find on forums/social media into my books and sell them?

A: No. Don't copy material posted to forums or social media into your Miskatonic Repository work, whether that material was shared by the Chaosium creative team or by third parties. When you upload a new Repository work to DriveThruRPG, you must confirm that it contains your own original work and conforms to the community content program rules. You can't share or sell other people's work without their permission. And you need to include accurate copyright notices (with authors' and artists' names, not their forum handles or email addresses), plus the required permission statements for any Chaosium-owned or Moon Design Publications-owned text you have received permission to quote in your community content work.

If we become aware of any concerns about content ownership, we'll let you know what's wrong, remove the work from sale until the problems are resolved, and take other actions necessary to protect the Repository program. If you want to avoid problems, create your own content and have clear, written permission to use any content you do not personally create.

Q: How do I find public domain images to use in my work?

A: First, make certain you understand what "public domain" means. You can begin your research here: <https://fairuse.stanford.edu/overview/public-domain/>

Once you have the basics on public domain down, there are extensive resources available for royalty free, public domain content to use in your publications. You'll want to start by referring to the Miskatonic Repository Additional Guidelines: <https://support.drivethrurpg.com/hc/en-us/articles/115005848483-Miskatonic-Repository-Additional-Guidelines>

You can also find royalty-free images at Pixabay: <https://pixabay.com/>. A useful site for character portraits is: <https://thispersondoesnotexist.com/>

Always make sure you check that the images you are using are not covered by copyright. If you are uncertain of the copyright status for something, don't use it.

Q: I want to use the image of an Elder Sign or the Yellow Sign in my work. Is this allowed?

A: Chaosium's Star Elder Sign and Yellow Sign designs are copyright to Chaosium. They can be used as part of a Miskatonic Repository work provided you include the appropriate copyright statement in the book.

Chaosium Yellow Sign © 1989 Chaosium Inc. Used with permission.

Chaosium Arcane Symbol (the Star Elder Sign) © 1983 Chaosium Inc. Used with permission.

Q: For Chaosium materials available to us for use, can we modify content to fit better into our scenarios?

A: Rather than modify Chaosium creations, you should create your own monster or character or location that's tailor made for your scenario.

Q: I don't like some of your game's rules so I've created replacements. Can I publish those house rules on the Miskatonic Repository?

A: The Miskatonic Repository is not the right place for drop-in replacements for any *Call of Cthulhu* rules, such as an "improved" combat or magic system. Please write for our existing rules; don't replace them wholesale.

Q: OK. Replacement rules are out. What's the best way to present new or expanded rules in a Miskatonic Repository work?

A: The Miskatonic Repository is not meant for new rules systems and subsystems that aren't thematically linked to playable content. You can include expanded rules or rules for something not covered by the current edition of *Call of Cthulhu* in a scenario or campaign if the rules can be used in playing the scenario or campaign.

Q: Can I adapt rules from other games so they work with *Call of Cthulhu* and sell them on the Miskatonic Repository?

A: No. Do not copy or adapt rules from other games—including other Chaosium games, especially previous editions of *Call of Cthulhu*—into your Miskatonic Repository work. Again, this is a matter of copyright and permission. When you upload a new Repository work to DriveThruRPG, you must confirm that it contains your own original work (so no rules you did not create) and conforms to the community content program rules. If we become aware of any concerns about content ownership, we'll let you know what's wrong, remove the work from sale until the problems are resolved, and take other actions necessary to protect the Repository program.

Q: Can I update *Call of Cthulhu* Classic books to the current edition?

A: Please do not update previous edition *Call of Cthulhu* publications to the current edition. If we want the material updated, that's something we will handle.

Q: Can I update *Call of Cthulhu* stat-blocks from an older book to the current edition of the game?

A: Please don't spend time or page space on conversions of stat-blocks from older *Call of Cthulhu* products to the current edition of the rules. Just like creating "easy printing" stat-blocks from Chaosium books, this could set unwelcome precedents, so we don't want you to do it.

Many of our older titles are available in print or PDF form, so if you need to point readers toward an older book, provide a page reference and discuss any specific changes or updates to the older material that they should note. (e.g. "remember to multiply all the printed characteristics by 5, as this book was written before 7e."). But don't sweat the small stuff, like translating every stat-block: conversions are easy enough to do on the fly. Plus, we don't want the Repository to become a marketplace for slightly "revised" or "enhanced" versions of published Chaosium stat-blocks.

Q: Can I publish a big book of miscellaneous *Call of Cthulhu* lore?

A: All Repository works should include playable content. An article about 1920s shopping could include price lists for different markets, valuable goods, or fashion trends—content that is directly useful in games, rather than dry, exclusively academic overviews.

Q: How about a guide to running different kinds of adventures?

A: While a “meta” guide to running different types of adventures in *Call of Cthulhu* sounds nifty, for the Repository you would want to write up some scenarios in various genres and with different story structures, and then walk the Keeper through some tips on how to run those scenarios. So for a futuristic scenario, you could include details on how the tech can be used to heighten the tension, not dissipate it. That balance of material would give the overall work playable content, while the notes on how to run the scenarios would be thematically linked and geared toward making the scenario more playable.

Q: I am an experienced, devoted *Call of Cthulhu* player and Keeper. I would like to sell a book of rules exploits and interpretations developed over my years of play. Is this possible on the Repository?

A: If you want to present your own rules interpretations, or debate game system minutiae, you should do that on the [BRP Central forums](#) rather than package that discussion for sale on the Repository. You’re far more likely to find fellow fans interested in those discussions on the forums.

Q: The rules say fiction is banned in Repository works. That’s a bit harsh! Isn’t there any kind of fiction I can include in my works?

A: You can include short fictional text that’s used to set the tone for a scene or a scenario (i.e. “color text”), provided it is thematically linked to playable content. Full short stories are not acceptable content. Don’t post short story collections, novellas, novels, or literary journals. The Miskatonic Repository is not the right place for that content.

Q: The rules say comic strips are out, too.

A: As with fiction, it’s okay to use short sections of comic strip or comic book art that set the tone for a scene or a scenario, so long as they are thematically linked to playable content. Entire stories told in comic strip or comic book form are not acceptable content.

Do not create comic strips or comic book pages that include material from Chaosium products, as that could clash with our licensing agreements. If you stick to your own creations and want to make something that looks like a comic book page to introduce your scenario or give a character’s backstory, that sounds wonderful! Keep things tight, though, and don’t try to publish multi-page or serialised sequential narratives.

Q: Can I sell a fanzine containing a medley of short articles about different subjects from different creators? That sounds easier than writing an entire scenario, or a setting pack, or other playable content.

A: In general, we don’t think the Miskatonic Repository is the right place for a 1980s- or 1990s-style ’zine with a mix of different content (editorial, rules, reviews, rumors, lore articles, comics, etc.). If you want to create a “fanzine-like” product, keep everything in each issue thematically linked to playable content and do not use the fanzine wrapper to include material that wouldn’t otherwise be permitted (fiction, comic strips, rules conversions, etc.). The easiest path would be to stick to standalone, thematically consistent works.

Q: I’m an artist, not a writer. Can I sell maps, plans, artwork, tokens, or other art content without writing a scenario or setting book?

A: We are delighted when artists and cartographers create content, including redrawn versions of published Chaosium maps, and post them on the Miskatonic Repository. Remember, art and map materials offered in Repository titles should be designed as playable content or to be used in support of playable content.

Three things you can't do:

- * Sell Chaosium's original maps or art. They have to be your own versions, recognizably your own work. (For maps, change the style, the font, the labels, add new details: don't mechanically reproduce something that already exists);
- * Sell unpublished Chaosium maps or art under contract to Chaosium (e.g. draft or preview versions), unless you obtain permission from their creators and the copyright holders first, which is unlikely to be forthcoming;
- * Sell apps or software (including Roll20 plugins) via the Miskatonic Repository.

Q: So I can't develop *Call of Cthulhu* content directly for virtual tabletops?

A: At the moment, due to the deep and complex spread of intellectual property rights, the answer is no.

Q: Can I publish non-RPG game content on the Miskatonic Repository?

A: The Miskatonic Repository is not the right place for standalone games (e.g. board games, card games, miniature games, war games). You would need to discuss a separate *Call of Cthulhu* license to publish one of those, and it is quite possible such a license will not be available due to other existing licensing agreements. The Repository is intended to host playable content for Chaosium's own *Call of Cthulhu* roleplaying game.

Q: How about other media, like music or a video series?

A: If you want to create and sell your awesome new *Call of Cthulhu* video game, board game, card game, software app, symphony, novel, comic, or just about anything else that isn't clearly a scenario, sourcebook, art resource, or map designed to aid in playing our tabletop games, the Repository is not the place to do that. If you have a licensed project to propose that falls outside the scope of the Repository, email Chaosium at licensing@Chaosium.com. Keep in mind that Chaosium has many existing licensing agreements in place and some of them may mean we cannot consider your proposal at this time.

Q: Can you clarify what you mean by "thematically linked to playable content"?

A: Essentially, we want people to be able to run *Call of Cthulhu* tabletop roleplaying games using your community content and our rulebooks. Everything in your work should serve that goal. If you are wondering if something should be included in your Repository work, ask yourself if it is necessary for the scenario you want people to play or makes it easier for someone to run that scenario. If the content is not targeted for use in play in some way, it is straying from the intent of the Repository.

Q: The guides say we need to avoid "extreme adult content." What does that mean?

A: A scenario that provides rules mechanics for graphically butchering player characters in combat would violate the Miskatonic Repository rules against works containing "material that the general public would classify as extreme adult content, such as pornography or extreme violence." Child abuse, rape, genocide, and similar content falls outside the scope of what is appropriate for the Repository. Avoid it. If we discover such objectionable content, the work will be removed from sale and we will take other actions necessary to protect the Repository program.

Q: What does “a reasonable person” or “the general public” mean, when the guide sets those as ways to judge if Repository content is appropriate?

A: These are technical terms capable of being interpreted by the courts. You can research them at online legal sites such as Nolo.com (<https://www.nolo.com/dictionary>) or, if you are concerned about the site language or terms, you can consult with a lawyer before posting your content on the Miskatonic Repository.

The bottom line is that Chaosium has final say over material offered on the Miskatonic Repository. We will work with you to correct problems, but if we decide that material posted on the site is objectionable because of content that violates intellectual property rights or others laws, or is libelous, defamatory, violent, racist, sexist, bigoted, or in any way inappropriate, we have the final say on its continuing availability.

Q: How does Print on Demand work? How many copies do I have to sell to request POD?

A: A title must reach Electrum Seller status (250+ copies) before it is eligible for Print on Demand. This restriction is necessary because OneBookShelf has limited capacity to add POD titles to their site. The Repository is fortunate that POD is still an option at all; POD was stopped altogether for some similar programs on OBS.

Please note that Chaosium may, from time to time, approve a Miskatonic Repository title for POD *before* it reaches 250+ sales. We may even approve a title for POD on initial release. This is at our discretion and will be done in cooperation with OneBookShelf. We will get in touch with you if this option becomes available for your work. Please do not contact us to request an early waiver.

Q: I didn’t find the answer to my specific question. Who do I contact?

A: In the first instance, you might ask in the [Miskatonic Repository Creators’ Circle](#) group on Facebook. You are also welcome to contact [Allan Carey](#), our Miskatonic Repository Community Ambassador. Allan will either be able to answer your query or direct you to the appropriate person at Chaosium if required.

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