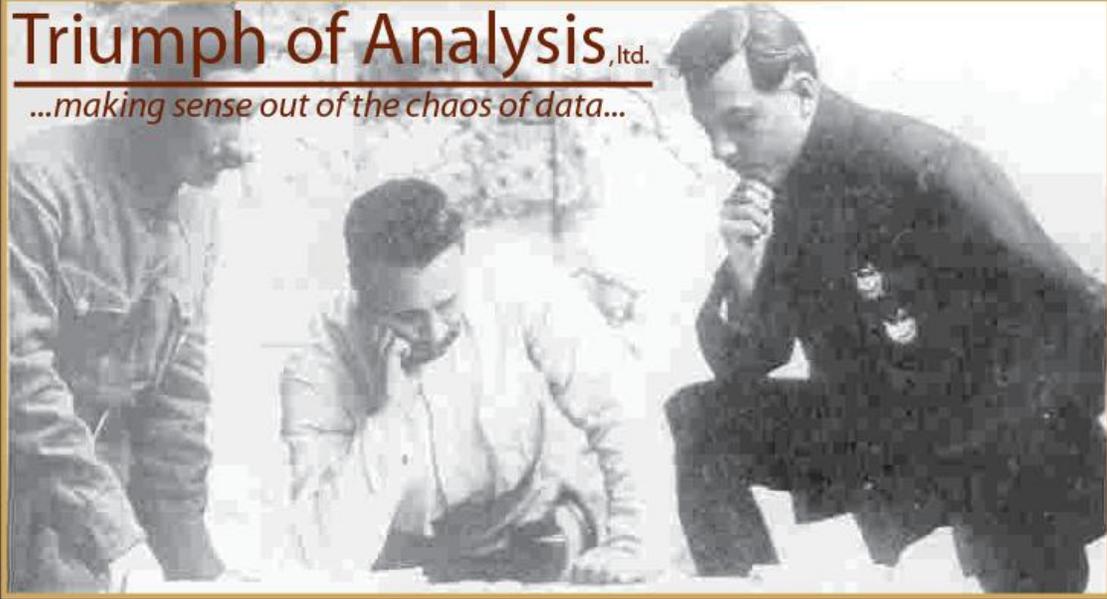


Triumph of Analysis^{,ltd.}

...making sense out of the chaos of data...



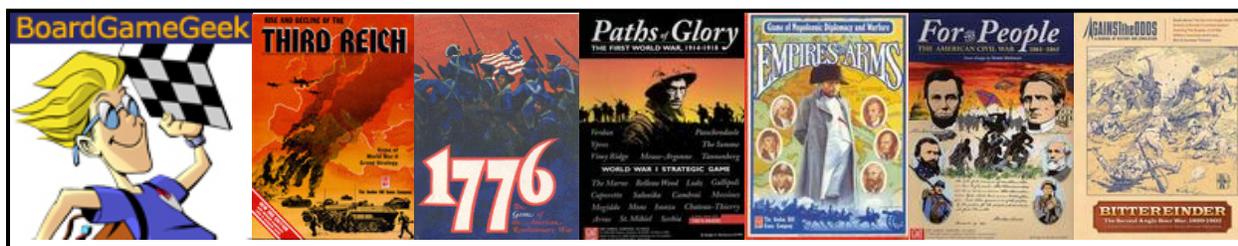
**Card Sharks, Blockheads, Reemed Euroweenies, Plastic Men
and Old Guard Hex and Potatoes Gamers; An Analysis of the Top
Historical Strategy Simulations ("Wargames") from 1958 through 2008 Utilizing
the Boardgame Geek Database**

June 12, 2008



by Herr Dr

v1.0



Card Sharks, Blockheads, Redeemed Euroweenies, Plastic Men and Old Guard Hex and Potatoes: An Analysis of the Top Wargames from 1958 through 2008 Utilizing the BGG Database.....June 12, 2008 by Herr Dr

Background

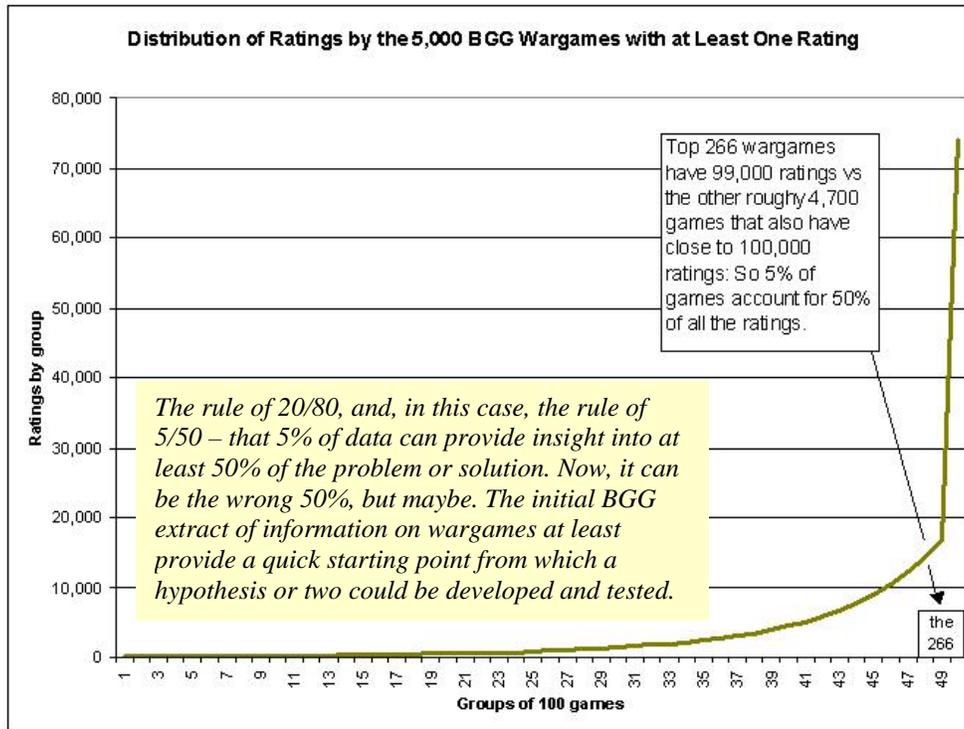
I recently stumbled across a June 7th post on the ATO Consimworld discussion board by Stephen Rawlings. He stated that the American Civil War, as a topic for historical strategy games (“wargames”), had dropped off a cliff. I wondered if that was true and what other wargame trends may exist. I turned to BoardGameGeek (BGG) www.boardgamegeek.com, an outstanding online resource for those interested in gaming. BGG contains a database of about every boardgame ever published. Any bloke can post a game in the database. And, anyone can rate a game on a variety of factors – so, thousands of games and an ocean of data. Of course, the data is only as good (representative) of those inputting that data. A subset of the boardgame database are wargames and a subset of the BGG audience are wargamers. Nipped by the curiosity bug, I quickly developed a database (referred to as the TOA {Triumph of Analysis} Database in this article), utilizing the BGG data, to gain some insight regarding wargaming trends. This article summarizes some of the key findings of that initial manic effort.

Methodology

I sorted the BGG database for every wargame (historical strategy game with a map, cards, dice and counters) possessing at least 100 game ratings. What’s a rating? Any individual can log on to BGG and rate a game from 1 (horrible) to 10 (outstanding). Rationale for a cutoff of 100 ratings:

- **A nice round number**
- **Manageable:** The initial data extract generated about 340 wargames
- **Sample size:** A belief that extract represented roughly 5% of all wargames ever published; I’d guess there have been about 5,000 > 6,000 wargames published (4,800 listed with at least 1 rating in the BGG database... roughly an average of 100/year since Tactics II published in 1958)
- **Half of the ratings universe:** There were roughly about 200,000 ratings for wargames in the BGG database (“wargames” that have at least 1 rating) and this group of wargames has almost 100,000. So, while the sample size only represents 5% of titles, it accounts for 50% of the ratings.
- **Survived initial giggle test:** After reviewing extract of 340 wargames, the vast majority of the usual suspects were accounted for: (ASL, 3R, WIF, etc).

So, the next step was to turn the extract into a relatively clean database I accomplished that by consolidating some title (expansions), showing the exit to games that weren’t really wargames (well, per my definition), etc. That shortened the list from 340 to 266 wargames.



We got issues, maybe.

Of course, there are **MANY** potential issues with the data including:

- Are the individuals that rate these wargames representative of wargamers in general?
- Is this particular snapshot (June 8, 2008) representative?
- What about the effect of newer games potentially getting higher ratings (“grade inflation”)?
- Older games don’t show as much leg as newer titles (less sexy designs by today’s standards), so, they probably don’t receive as many ratings now
- ...and many more issues

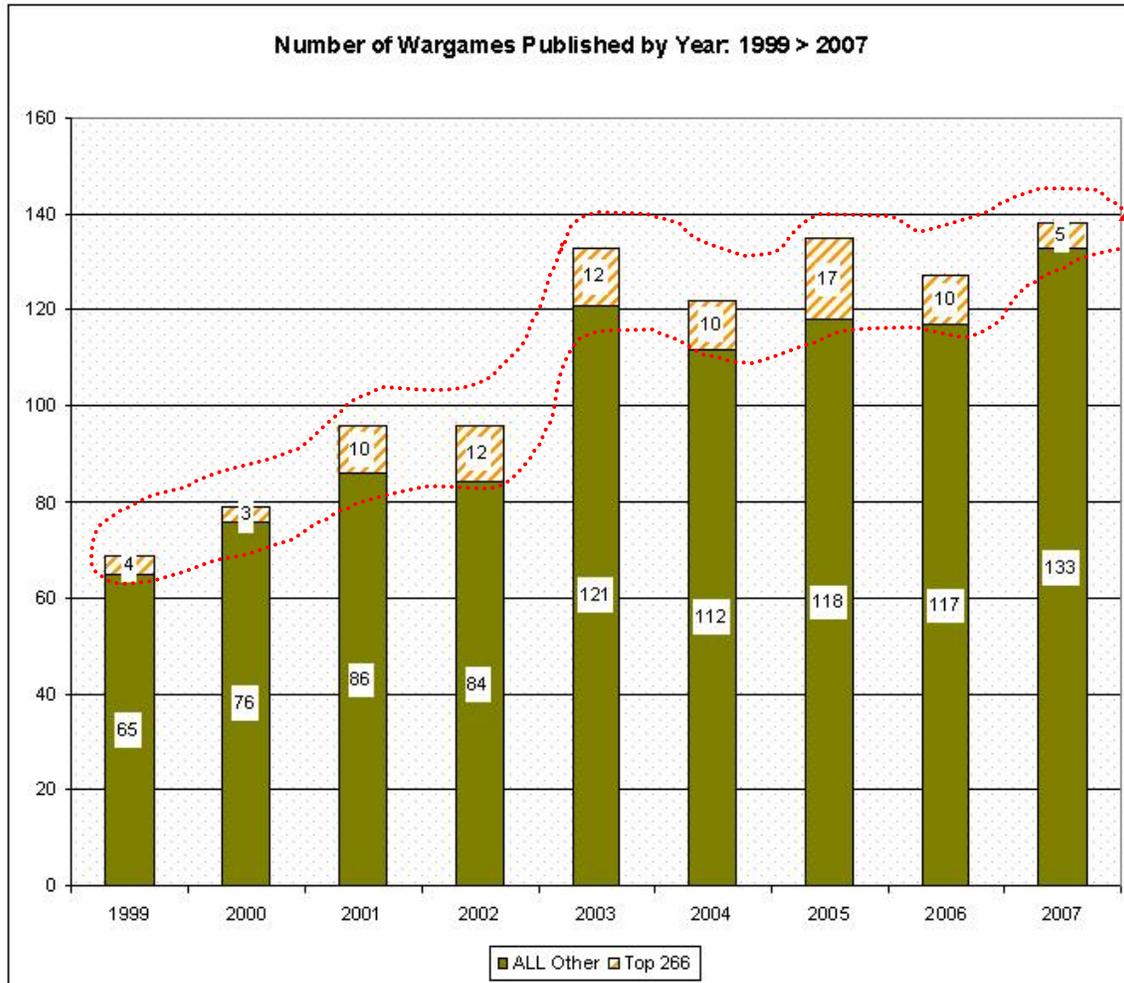
However, BGG is THE database for trying to obtain some basic trend information regarding wargames. Note to the wargame game companies: get a key statistics clearinghouse. Imagine if the statistics contain within actually included sales of games verses the ratings utilized. More on that later... A few last notes before presenting some of the key findings:

- **“Top wargame”** is defined as a wargame having 100 BGG ratings as of June 8, 2008. Full stop. **“Top wargame” has no other meaning for purposes of this article.**
- I’ve supplemented the BGG information for each game with additional data (ex: # of consimworld messages)

I then began to post a few charts on the ATO discussion board on www.consimworld.com. That generated discussion. I then decided to develop this report and had some fun “branding” the database of the Top 266 wargames: **The TOA Database**. Hopefully, some enterprising soul will expand on this analysis. Or not.

Proper Context

The 266 Top Wargames contained in the **TOA Database** are the tip of the iceberg. Approximately 125 wargames are turned out a year (I did some pruning of the list available at the hobby's library, www.grognard.com). This flood of content, its depth and the diversity of subjects is **THE** great strength of the hobby. Whether these Top 5% of wargames represent 1%, 5% or 50% of playing time/sales/buzz, who knows? (I'd place my bet on the 50% horse).



...and a word from our sponsor.

When I thought about preparing this piece, I contemplated submitting it to one of the trade rags for publication. Or, perhaps waiting until I had more material (other information about our wargame co-op) and then developing a small “state of the wargame hobby” publication. But, why wait? And, I’m in the middle of designing a new wargame beast on the Spanish Civil War – so no bandwidth. So, I decided to make it available to the hobby as is. Think of it as shareware; if you enjoy it or get some utility out of the analysis, drop me a few quid via paypal and it will pay for a few t-shirts for the next WAM convention (www.wamconvention.com) in January, 2009. You can find me on consimworld.com. Or, I have been known to lift a pint or two at the industry’s best gaming con, WBC (www.boardgamers.org) and I’ll buy you a beer if you have some pithy insights into what this data means. Regardless, enjoy the analysis.

Introduction

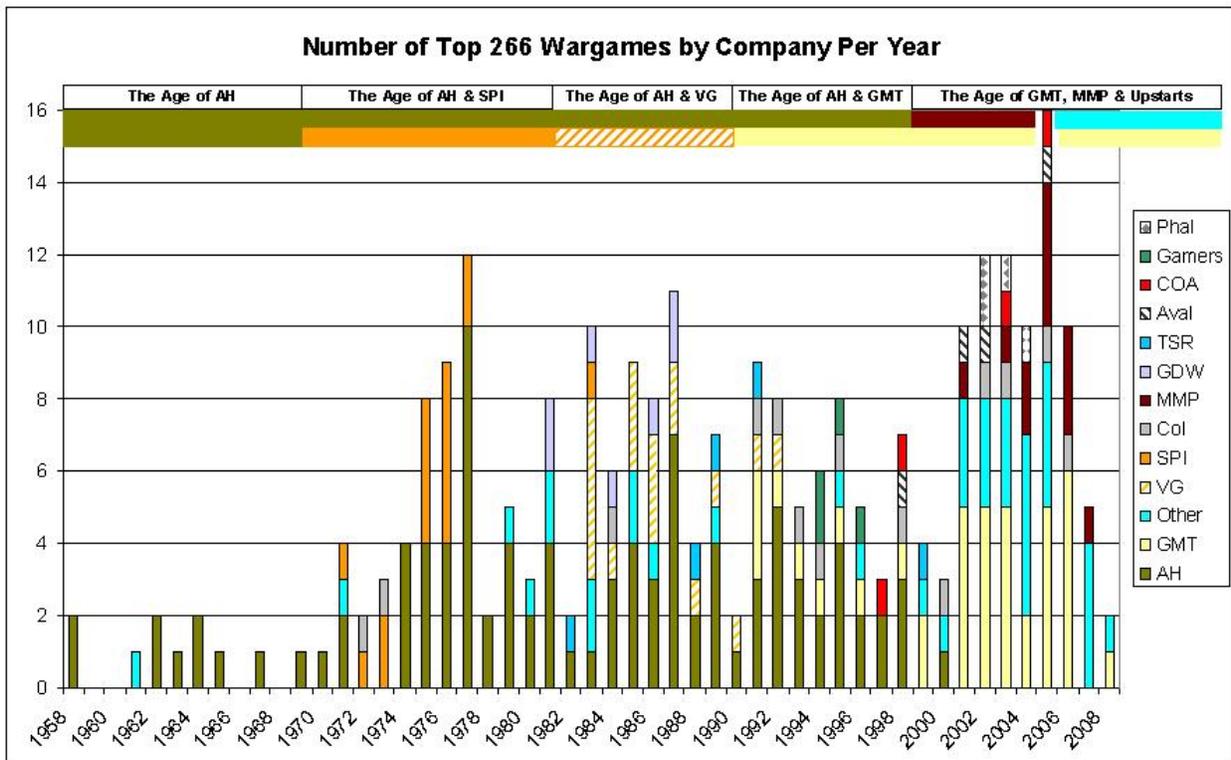


How good are the BGG ratings? Any system that allows anyone to vote regarding the quality of an item has its strengths and weaknesses. No need to rehash them here. Suffice to say, I ran a number of correlations on the metrics. Here are a few of those values:

- Rating & Weight: .42
- Rating & Year: .48
- # of Ratings and Year: .07
- # of Ratings & Weight: -.11

For example, rating of a game (how good) and its weight (complexity) are 42% positively correlated; no surprise given that we are discussing the Top wargames.

My hobby began with Avalon Hill. My first wargame was Panzerblitz, purchased at a Sears store a full head of hair ago with money from my newspaper route. Then I stumbled across a flyer from SPI – oh my. When I first compiled the TOA Database, one of the first “cross-tabs” I performed was to examine the wargames by company and by year to determine if it remotely reflected my picture of wargaming. The chart below summarizes that analysis. It seems to match conventional wisdom (*Is that good or bad?*); that wargaming began with Avalon Hill, then was jointly ruled from both Baltimore and SPI-land, witnessed the demise of SPI and the emergence of Victory Games, endured some tough times until the welcomed emergence of GMT and finally entered a second golden age of wargaming with GMT, MMP, a number of smaller bulwarks (ex COA) and some exciting new upstarts. So, the TOA Database survived my initial giggle test.



The next two stress tests: topic and tribe...

Are the Fellas all Here?

Summary of Analysis of BGG Database Regarding "Top" 266 Wargames - June 8, 2008												
Subject	Titles	% of tot	# of		Games with High # of Ratings				Heavy			
			Ratings	% of tot	Rate/Title	1000+	% of titles	300+	% of titles	Weight	% Hvy	
American Civil War	23	9%	6,043	6%	263	1	4%	4	17%	5	22%	
Ancients	19	7%	7,474	8%	393	2	11%	5	26%	6	32%	
American Revolutionary War	6	2%	1,518	2%	253	0	0%	2	33%	0	0%	
All Other Topics	23	9%	8,929	9%	388	2	9%	7	30%	4	17%	
Modern	34	13%	8,329	8%	245	1	3%	2	6%	14	41%	
Napoleonic	19	7%	5,778	6%	304	0	0%	8	42%	6	32%	
WW 1	12	5%	7,754	8%	646	3	25%	4	33%	3	25%	
WW 2	130	49%	53,294	54%	410	8	6%	38	29%	56	43%	
TOTAL	266	100%	99,119	100%	373	17	6%	70	26%	94	35%	
Subject	Charles S Roberts		Scale/Type				When Published					
	Winners	Nominees	Strat	Oper	Tac	Nav	Air	Before	1980's	1990's	2000>4	2005 +
American Civil War	4	9	7	8	7	1		6	3	11	3	0
Ancients	3	8	10	4	5			3	2	7	4	3
American Revolutionary War	0	3	3	2	1			1		2	2	1
All Other Topics	2	6	19		4			6	2	3	8	4
Modern	9	16	5	5	7	9	8	2	21	5	4	2
Napoleonic	3	6	6	10		3		7	2	2	4	4
WW 1	1	4	5	2		1	4	3	3	1	4	1
WW 2	15	47	26	35	42	11	16	31	35	25	20	19
TOTAL	37	99	81	66	66	25	28	59	68	56	49	34

Note: Top is ONLY defined as those wargames having 100 or more BGG ratings (rating a game great/poor on a scale of 1 to 10)

After compiling the chart above, it was beginning to not only look like a duck, but quack and walk like one also. Mark Herman, among others, feels that WW2 accounts for 50% of the hobby. Completely by chance, the titles split 130 WW2 and 136 non-WW2. In terms of ratings (again, a rating is anyone one rating by an individual of a game on a scale of 1 {an abomination} to 10 {the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel}), about a 53k/46k split WW2/non-WW2. So, we're dangerously close to the 50/50 split. Another indicator: CSR Awards 15/22 WW2/non and CSR Nominations 47/42 WW2/non. Does it represent the tribes within the wargame hobby?



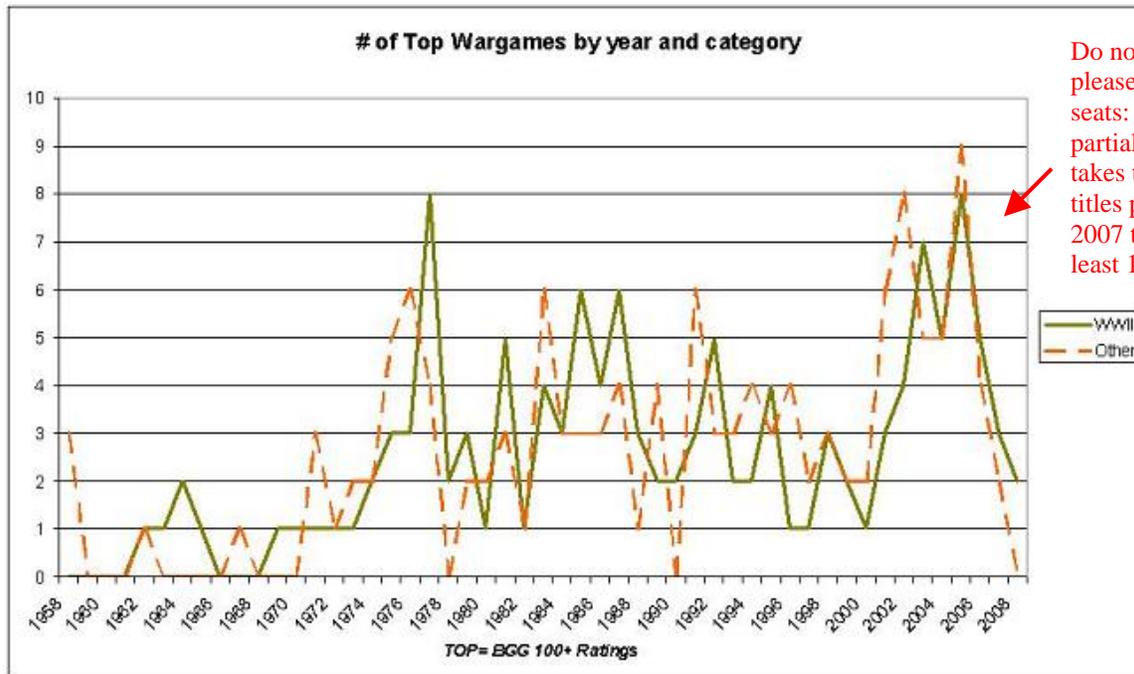
"The Fellas"

It appears all the nutcases are here; nutcases defined as boardgame wargamers. Interesting that the "hex" genre ratings account for roughly 1/2 of the wargame universe. An upcoming chart shows how that percentage has dramatically evolved; from a 100% to a **significantly** less percentage...keep reading. Also of note, check out the consimworld.com message levels for CDWs (Card Driven Wargames); quite a buzz. And, that about 70% of the CDW titles have been nominated for CSR awards.

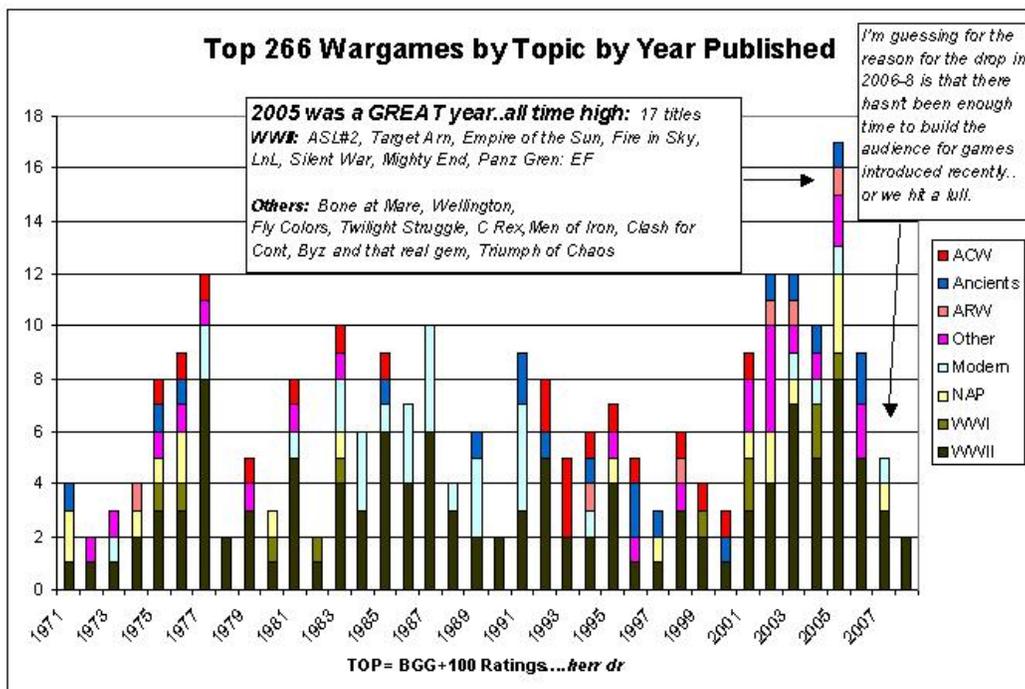
Card Sharks, Blockheads, The Euroweenie Converted, Plastic Men and Old Guard Hex and Potatoes Genres											
	Weighted Year	Game Weight	BGG Rating	# of Games	%	# of BGG Ratings	%	Ratings			CSR/ Game
								Game	Consim	CSR Nom	
CDW	2001	3.4	7.9	16	6%	9,668	10%	604	15	11	69%
Block	1999	3.0	7.7	19	7%	8,100	8%	426	4	8	42%
Wood	2003	3.3	7.6	5	2%	3,344	3%	669	1	2	40%
Card	1999	2.2	7.2	20	8%	10,712	11%	536		4	20%
Plastic	1994	2.6	7.1	12	5%	22,758	23%	1,897	1	2	17%
Hex	1985	3.3	7.0	194	73%	44,338	45%	229		72	37%
Total/Weighted Avg	1992	3.0	7.2	266	100%	98,920	100%	372		99	37%

Note: Consim = Messages per Rating, CSR Nom = # of Games Nominated for CSR Award

Note: There are a few data blemishes, as this was a work in progress. But, the differences in the data here fall within the "noise" range.



The chart above also demonstrates the 50/50 WW2/non-WW2 split. It is quite amazing how the number of titles introduced each year in both broad categories is relatively the same. And read the note in red above: the dramatic fall off in 2007 & 2008 may NOT represent a drop off in the industry, but rather partial results and “it takes time to build an audience” effects. So, no need to jump out a window quite yet.



to Berlin in particular, one sees a “turning over” of the guard; from pure hex and potatoes to Card Driven Wargames (CDWs).

Young Guard (YG): A sweet spot combination of complexity (in the same ballpark, but not nearly as complex as the Old Guard games) and playability. The line between Young Guard and Recruit games is not clear or clean. “Young” does necessarily mean more recent games, but rather games that do not contain quite the amount of “seasoning” (read flavor, dreaded chrome and/or complexity) as their Old Guard counterparts. Hits such as We the People, Hammer of the Scots, Wilderness War and Breakout Normandy categorize this cluster. It appears that designers in this category sacrificed some chrome/complexity/etc for shorter playing time games.

Recruits: These games are much lower in complexity, much higher in accessibility and excel at enlisting new wargame recruits. Titles include Twilight Struggle, Command and Colors and Memoir '44. There was actually a very recent BGG Geeklist, or cautionary tale depending upon your perspective, (28,480 titled “*The Road to Hell is Paved with Wargames*”) that mentions most of the Recruit games that ensnared one poor soul.

Engineers: Older, highly complex games that appear to not have large cult followings as Old Guard games. Engineers tend to be more specialized about a topic than OGs.

Regular Infantry: Sort of the lunch box, bunts and singles category of wargames. Some golden oldies here including Panzerblitz, Panzerleader, WS&IM and 1776 among others; the resting grounds for the classics.

Militia: Games that yesterday probably occupied other categories. Their ratings may be lower since they are no longer the newest kid on the block. They are also significantly lighter than the other game clusters.

So, six clusters for 266 wargames. Do the clusters make sense? After plotting out the games (see chart page 8), I utilized color to differentiate clusters titles (common colors for games with the same characteristics). You’ll notice a lot of green blobs; those are games, but I didn’t bother identifying them otherwise nothing would jump out. I then hit the TOA Database and generating statistics regarding the six clusters. Following is a summary of those data runs:

Top 266 Wargame Game Clusters												
Cluster	# of Games	% of all	#of Ratings	% of all	ratings/ game	Avg Weight	Avg Rating	Avg Year	Max Rating	Min Rating	Max Weight	Min Weight
Old Guard	60	23%	16,684	17%	278	4.0	7.8	1992	8.7	7.1	4.7	3.5
Young Guard	18	7%	3,332	3%	185	3.1	7.6	1998	8.2	7.2	3.4	2.8
Recruit	28	11%	32,034	32%	1144	2.6	7.7	2002	8.4	7.1	3.4	1.8
Engineer	16	6%	2,971	3%	186	4.2	6.4	1983	7.0	4.8	4.8	3.8
Regulars	57	21%	15,615	16%	274	3.3	6.8	1985	7.6	5.3	3.7	2.9
Militia	87	33%	28,248	29%	325	2.6	6.5	1984	7.3	3.7	3.1	1.3

So, what’s it mean? Having reviewed the Old Guard games, they are the cornerstones of the wargaming hobby: they have tournaments, massive message traffic on Consimworld, have snared quite a few CSR nominations/awards, etc. I’ve included a list of those games below; essentially hardcore wargamers’ wargames. This does not necessarily mean that are difficult to learn to play, just very difficult to learn to play well (which is why we dig them). Chess is a ridiculously predictable and easy game by comparison – where even a lowly computer can win.

Young Guard games are more accessible than the OG brethren, but at the sacrifice of some flavor (“chrome”) and history; hey, that’s THE design tradeoff in wargames. The Recruit games are what the name implies; a great bunch of games for recruiting new wargamers. Regarding games within the Regular, Militia and Engineer clusters, each has still received over 100 ratings – thus putting them in this “Top” group of wargames – and many are industry classics.

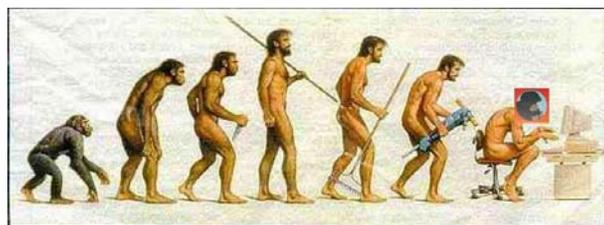
So, yes, the clusters make sense. I plan to do more extensive analysis of them in the future. Something else about the game clusters and some outstanding analysis performed by Matthew Grey of BGG fame.

Mr.Grey’s analysis (see geeklists 18,879, 18,977 and 18,390) clusters the 3,500 BGG gamers who have completed Top Ten lists of their favorite games. Mr. Grey has developed clusters of 3, 5 and 9 player segments. Below is a chart of the cluster analysis for 5 player segments:

M. Grey's Cluster Analysis of BGG Gamers							
Cluster	Euro-1: Core Eurogamers	Euro-2: Family Eurogamers	Euro-3: Heavy/Complex Eurogamers	Ameri-1: Amerigamers (aka "Ameritrashers")		Ameri-2: Wargamers	
% of BGG	52%	19%	13%	10%		6%	
(see note 1)	Puerto Rico	BattleLore	Euphrat & Tigris	Battle Lore	2006	Advanced Squad leader	1985
Games most associated with the cluster	Caylus	Carcassonne	Die Macher	War of the Ring	2004	Hannibal: Rome v. Carthage	1996
	Power Grid	Settlers of Catan	Age of Steam	Command & Colors Ancients	2006	Up Front	1983
	Princes of Florence	Ticket To Ride	El Grande	Twilight Imperium 3e	2005	Triumph of Chaos	2005
	El Grande	Ticket to Ride Europe	Ra	Memoir '44	2004	Bitter Woods	1998
	Tigris & Euphrates	Memoir '44	Yinsh	East Front	1985	Paths of Glory	1999
	Die Macher	Lost Cities	BattleLore	Twilight Struggle	2005	Twilight Struggle	2005
	Goa	Power Grid	Twilight Struggle	Fury of Dracula	2006	Here I Stand	2006
	Age of Steam	Ra	Crokinole	Battlestations	2004	ASL Starter Kit #2	2005
	Ra	Ticket To Ride Marklin	Command & Colors Ancients	Up Front	1983	Die Macher	1986

Note: Games listed as those most likely to appear in the members of that cluster's Top Ten Lists (about 3,500 people have completed these)
 Games in Red are contained in the Top 266 Wargame data set
 Date is the year in which the listed game was published

When you examine the games contained in the five BGG gaming groups and match those with the titles contained in the TOA Database, we have achieved both liftoff and see a path of hobby growth. The Recruit cluster of Top wargames has the potential to pull gamers from another 42% of the gaming community (Euro-2, Euro-3 and Ameri-1), significantly expanding the audience for wargames. To the degree that those Recruit games borrow the best elements of Eurogames is to the degree our hobby will expand, since many wargamers evolve from a lower species know as “Euroweenie”. It is not that dissimilar from times of yore; when many of us first played those wonderful 3M games, AH adult strategy titles, Risk and the Statis Pro sports games and found ourselves undergoing a similar metamorphous into wargamers (he wrote as in placed on a flame war retardant suit).



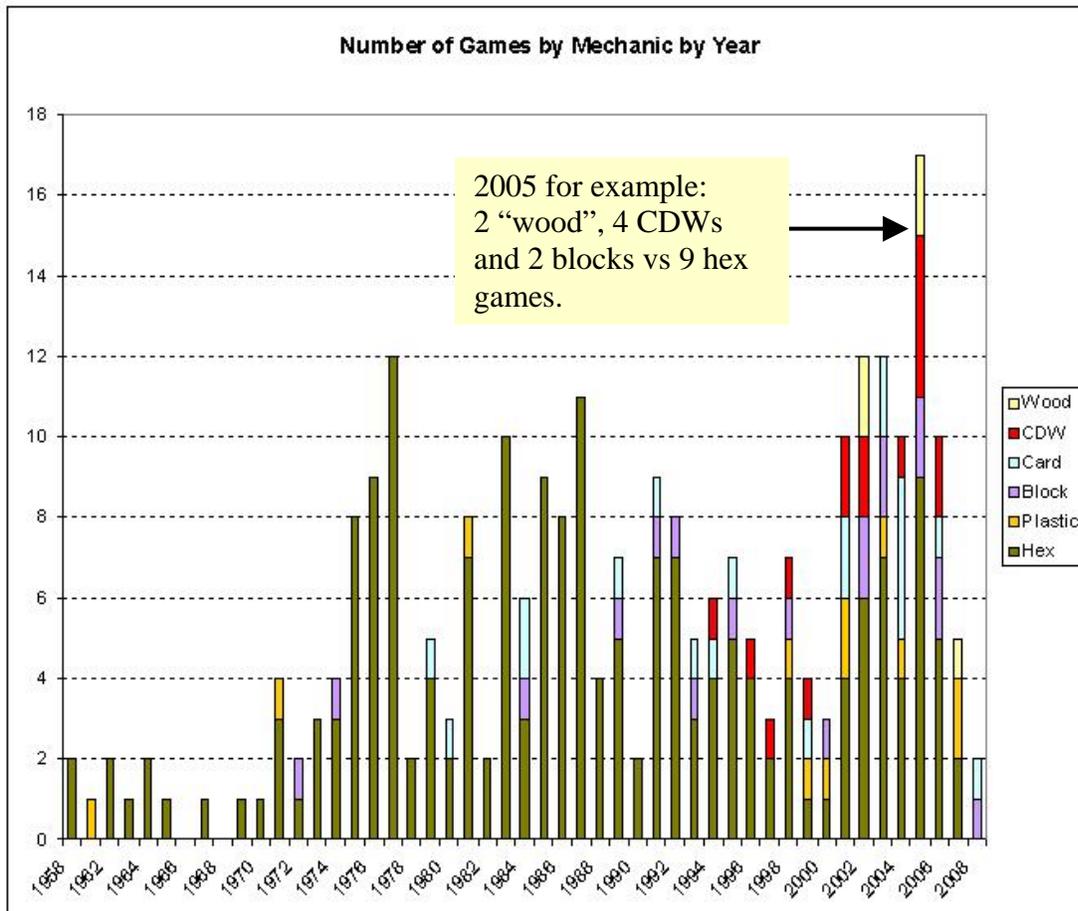
List of Old Guard, Young Guard and Recruit Game Clusters

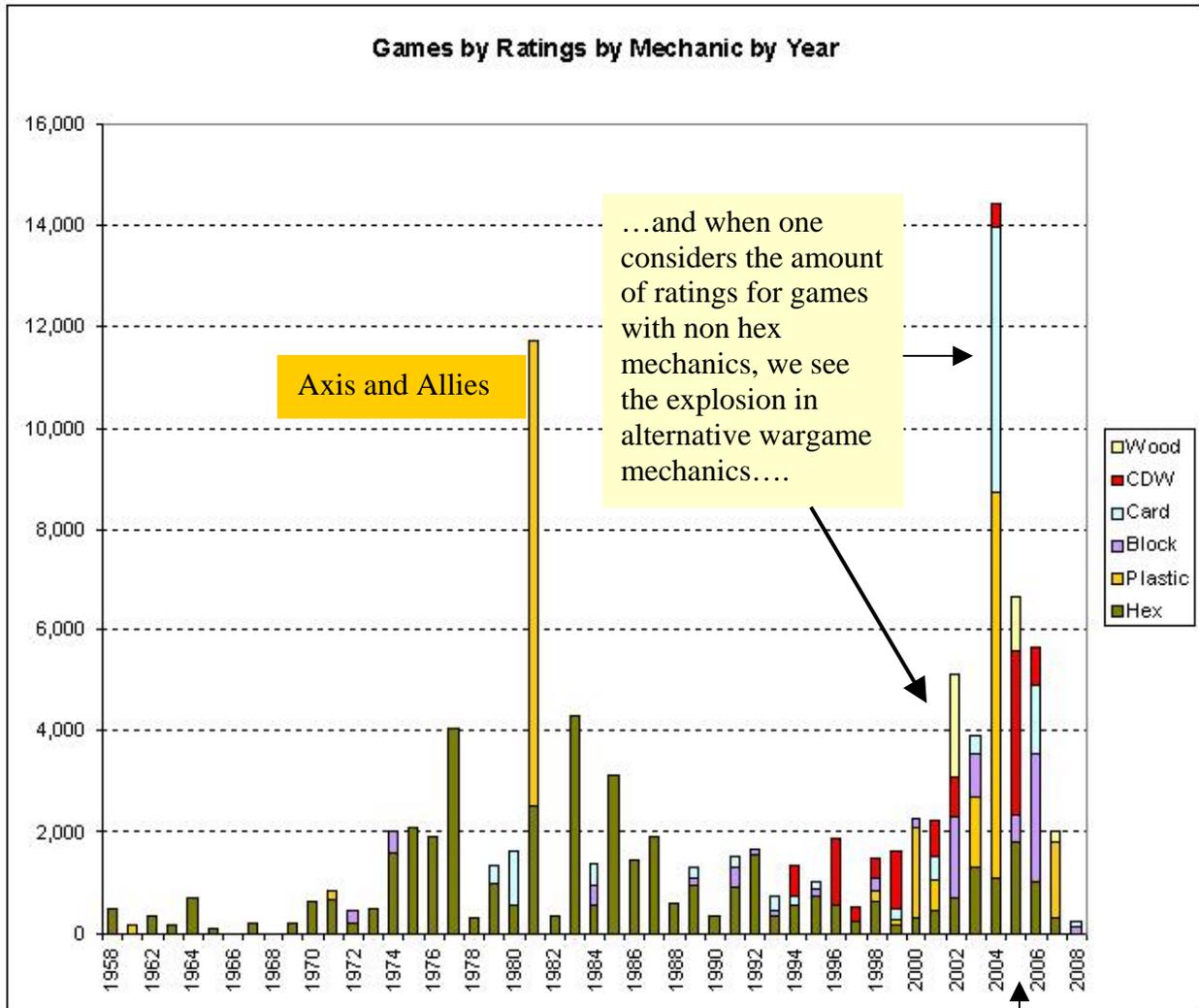
Old Guard	Young Guard
Advanced Squad Leader (+ modules)	Battle Hymn
Advanced Squad Leader (ASL) Starter Kit #1	Crusader Rex
Advanced Squad Leader (ASL) Starter Kit #2	Great Battles of Alexander: Deluxe
Advanced Squad Leader (ASL) Starter Kit #3	Here Come the Rebels
Europe Engulfed	Ironclads
Rommel in the Desert	Lock 'N Load: Band of Heroes
EastFront	Lock 'N Load: Forgotten Heroes Vietnam
EastFront II	Mighty Endeavor, The
SPQR	Panzer Grenadier: Eastern Front
DAK2	Roads to Gettysburg
Enemy at the Gates	Russian Campaign, The - 4th Edition
Tunisia	Shifting Sands
Advanced Tobruk	Stonewall in the Valley
Ardennes '44	Stonewall Jackson's Way
Breakout: Normandy	Stonewall's Last Battle
Burning Blue, The	Third World War, The
Civil War, the	We the People
Close Action	World at War: Eisenbach Gap
Downtown: Air War Over Hanoi, 1965-1972	
Empire of the Sun	Recruits
Empires in Arms	A Victory Lost
Flat Top	Aces of Aces (+expansions)
For the People	Afrika - 2nd Edition
Grant Takes Command	Battle Cry
Here I Stand	Bitter Woods (4th Edition)
Korean War, The	Bonaparte at Marengo
Longest Day, the	Clash for a Continent
Onward, Christian Soldiers	Combat Commander: Eur, Med, Para
Pacific War	Commands & Colors: Anc, Exp Packs 1,2,3
Paths of Glory	Corsairs and Hellcats
Pax Romana	Duel in the Dark
Siege of Jerusalem, The	FAB: The Bulge
Squad Leader (+ modules)	Fire in the Sky
This Accursed Civil War	Friedrich
Totaler Krieg!	Hammer of the Scots
Triumph of Chaos	Hannibal: Rome vs. Carthage
Upfront Modules	Hornet Leader
Vietnam 1965-1975	Liberty
Whistling Death	Memoir '44 (base, Air, East, Pac, Ter, Wint)
World in Flames	Napoleon's Triumph
World War II: Barbarossa to Berlin	Rise of the Luftwaffe
	Silent War
	Tide of Iron
	Twilight Struggle
	Up Front
	Wallenstein
	Wilderness War
	Wings of War (+ expansions)
<i>(Note: many of the ASL/SL modules are separate titles in this group)</i>	

Real Men.



A real wargame is one without cards, plastic men, wooden blocks or any other such nonsense. It has hexes, dice, a map, a really thick rulebook, a ton of ½ inch counters and is undecipherable to vast majority of Homo sapiens. Full stop. I required some consoling (and later counseling) to actually play my first Card Driven Wargame (CDW); the masterpiece **Paths of Glory**. Since then, I spend 90% of my gaming time with CDWs and according to the charts below, I think my experience is fairly typical (trying a new game mechanic, loving it and adding more titles to my collection). Significant segments of non hex wargames have emerged (no news here, but, just a quantification of that trend). The charts below help quantify this trend:





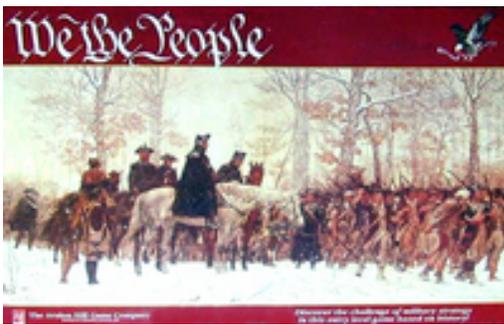
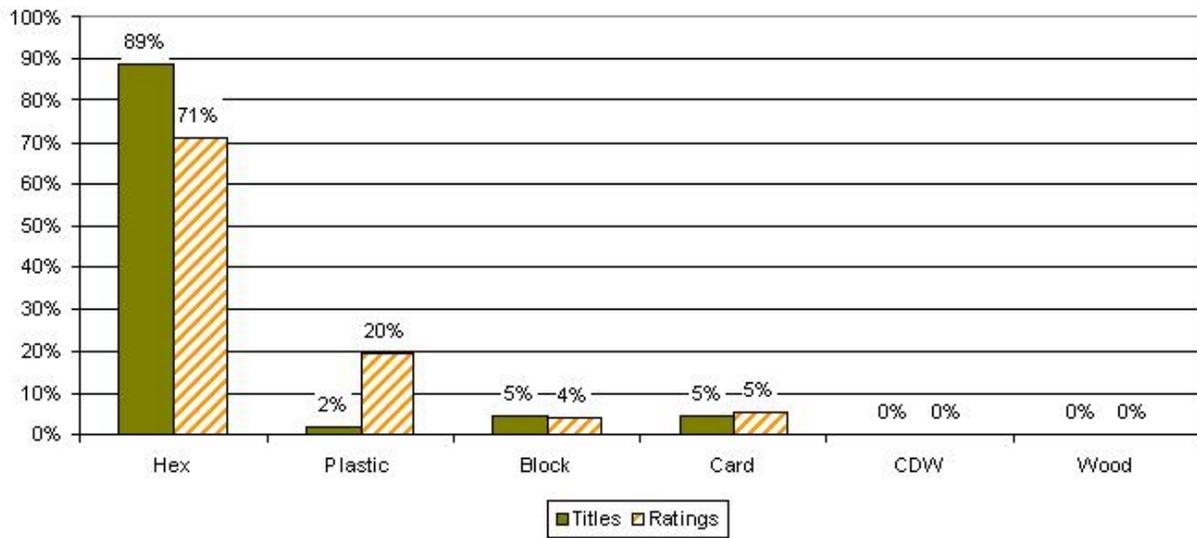
...and yet hex games are not going away...at least not too soon.



Discrete product placement

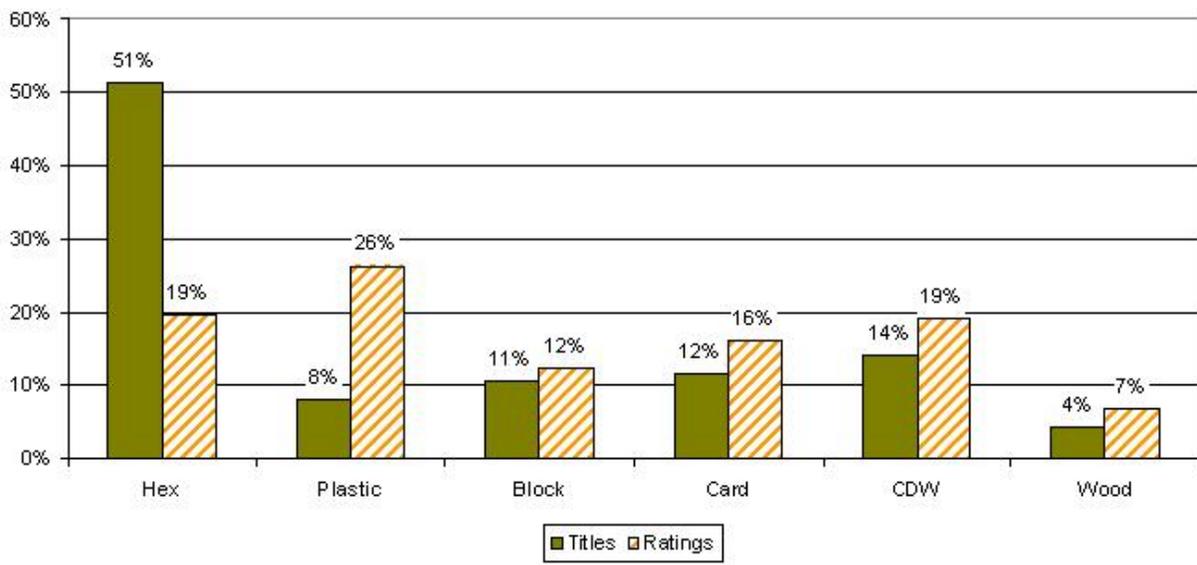
A few of the newer components making their way into our sacred hex and potatoes wargaming hobby are pictured above. Of course, whatever is new again was once first old, so, no need to be frightened. And, I would imagine that many of these components are recycled, moldy old counters, that were part of games either tossed out by your mothers or sold at garage sales.

1958 > 1993: % of Game Mechanics by # of Titles and # of Ratings



One analysis I thought would be fun to perform was to cut the data pre-1994 and post-1994, given that in 1994, Mr. Herman introduced the hobby to Card Driven Wargames (CDWs). The results of that analysis are contained on these two charts. As shown, there has been dramatic change in wargames as categorized by their mechanics.

1994 onwards: % of Game Mechanics by # of Titles and # of Ratings

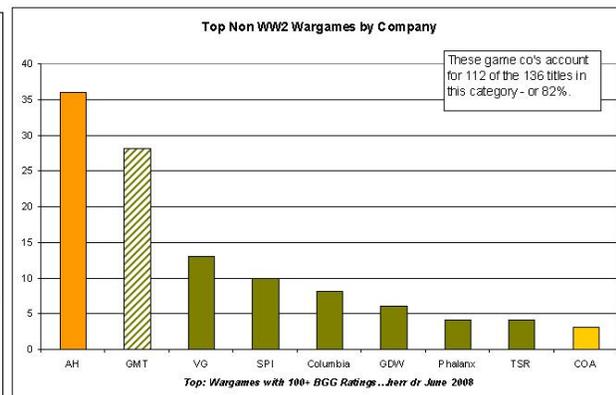
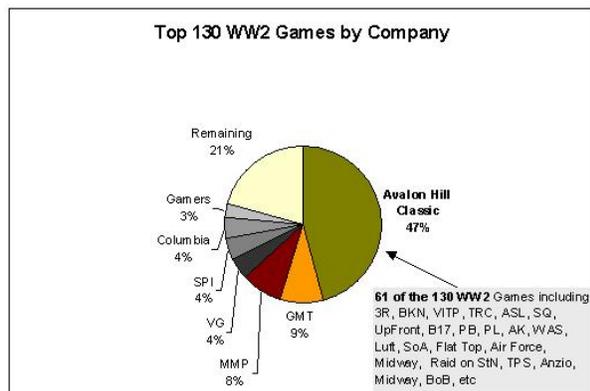




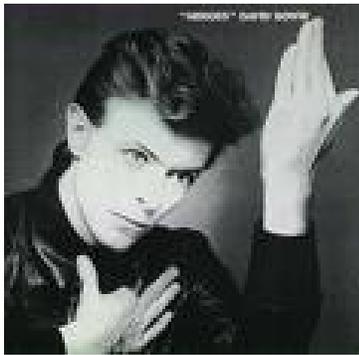
The Philistines

39 Companies, including a dozen that account for 85% of the titles in the TOA Database. The two big dogs, AH Classic and GMT, account for roughly 1/2 of the games. The next gang of four (Columbia, MMP, SPI and Victory Games) chip in another 1/4 of the games and the six other companies round out the top dozen (Avalanche, Clash of Arms, The Gamers, GDW, Phalanx and TSR) chuck in roughly 10%. The remaining 27 companies contributed about 1.5 titles each.

Company Summary				Game	Avg	CSR	CSR	Game	<2.5	2.5>2.9	3.0>3.4	3.5>4.0	4.1+	
	Games	%	# Rate	%	Rating	Year	Wins	Nominate	Weight	Skirmish	Light	Reg	Young	Old
											Inf	Inf	Guard	Guard
3W	1	0%	214	0%	6.5	1989	1	1	2.2	1	0	0	0	0
ADG	2	1%	978	1%	7.4	1984	1	1	4.5	0	0	0	0	2
AH Classic	98	37%	29819	30%	6.9	1982	9	25	3.3	15	11	33	14	25
Avalanche	4	2%	497	1%	6.6	2002	0	0	3.1	0	2	1	1	0
Azure	1	0%	126	0%	6.6	1996	0	0	4.8	0	0	0	0	1
COA	4	2%	599	1%	7.5	2001	0	1	3.7	0	1	0	1	2
Columbia	14	5%	3686	4%	5.6	1564	1	4	2.3	4	1	2	4	0
Compass	1	0%	198	0%	8.0	2005	0	1	3.3	0	0	1	0	0
Critical Hit	1	0%	117	0%	7.7	2002	0	1	4.3	0	0	0	0	1
DG	3	1%	458	0%	6.6	2001	0	1	2.7	2	0	0	0	1
DOW	1	0%	7612	8%	7.7	2004	0	1	2.2	1	0	0	0	0
Eagle	3	1%	2042	2%	6.2	2002	0	0	2.9	0	2	1	0	0
Eurogames	2	1%	348	0%	6.8	1982	0	0	2.3	2	0	0	0	0
FFG	2	1%	5008	5%	7.5	2006	0	0	2.6	1	0	1	0	0
Gamers	4	2%	473	0%	7.5	1995	2	3	3.3	1	1	0	1	1
GDW	7	3%	1675	2%	6.9	1984	1	3	3.1	2	1	1	2	1
GMT	40	15%	15371	16%	7.4	2001	11	27	3.2	7	7	12	13	1
Knight	1	0%	116	0%	7.1	2008	0	0	2.1	1	0	0	0	0
L2	2	1%	247	0%	7.9	2003	0	1	3.1	0	0	2	0	0
LNL	1	0%	139	0%	8.2	2007	0	0	2.8	0	1	0	0	0
Matrix	1	0%	202	0%	7.6	2005	0	0	3.0	0	0	1	0	0
Mayfair	1	0%	313	0%	6.2	2004	0	0	1.9	1	0	0	0	0
MB	2	1%	9345	10%	6.3	1971	0	0	2.3	1	1	0	0	0
MMP	12	5%	2901	3%	7.8	2005	1	8	3.2	2	2	3	4	1
Nova	1	0%	1061	1%	7.1	1980	0	0	1.8	1	0	0	0	0
Parker Bro	1	0%	171	0%	5.3	1971	0	0	2.2	1	0	0	0	0
Phalanx	4	2%	993	1%	5.9	2003	1	2	2.7	1	2	1	0	0
Queen	1	0%	1939	2%	7.8	2002	0	0	3.3	0	0	1	0	0
RGG	1	0%	776	1%	7.8	2004	0	0	3.3	0	0	1	0	0
Shrapnel	1	0%	148	0%	7.5	2003	1	1	3.2	0	0	1	0	0
Simmons	2	1%	821	1%	8.1	2006	1	1	8.3	0	0	2	0	0
SPI	16	6%	2536	3%	6.5	1975	1	5	3.1	4	6	1	2	3
TSR	5	2%	678	1%	6.2	1990	0	1	2.4	3	2	0	0	0
VG	19	7%	4552	5%	6.8	1986	6	9	3.4	2	0	7	6	4
Warfrog	2	1%	789	1%	6.9	2003	0	0	3.3	0	0	1	1	0
West End	2	1%	507	1%	7.0	1986	0	0	3.4	0	0	1	1	0
Worthington	1	0%	112	0%	7.6	2005	0	0	2.2	1	0	0	0	0
Yaquinto	1	0%	112	0%	7.4	1979	0	0	3.4	0	0	1	0	0
ZMAN	1	0%	449	0%	7.2	2007	0	0	2.5	0	1	0	0	0
Total	266	100%	98,128	100%	7.0		37	97	3.0	54	41	75	50	43

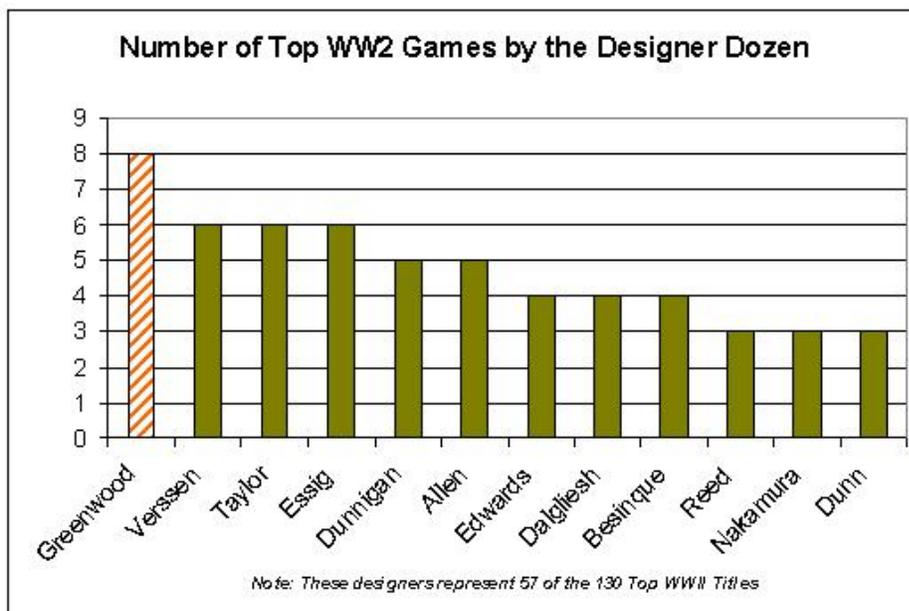


You could be a hero, if only for just one day.

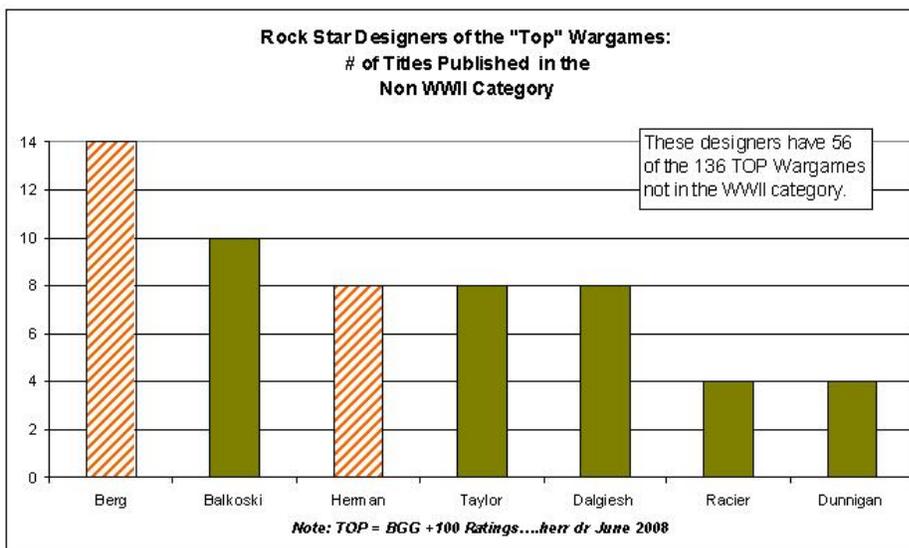


One analysis path that struck my fancy was to uncover how large of a fingerprint some designers had left on our imaginations (to steal a line from Elvis Costello).

The database revealed that elite eleven designers account for about 40% of titles, another 50 designers have between two and four games to their credit and that a final group of 75 designers produced just one title that made the database. I did not search for how many of those designers have no other game titles to their credit – although I think that it would be an interesting list.



Charles S. Roberts; the master that started this crazy hobby five decades ago. Four of his designs are in the TOA Database: Tactics II, Gettysburg, Africa Korps and Bismarck.



Number of Games by Designers		
Designer	#	Game Co's
Berg	14	GMT, AH, SPI, Phal
Taylor	14	AH
Dalglish	12	Col
Greenwood	11	AH
Balkoski	10	AH/VG
Herman	10	GMT/VG/AH
Dunnigan	9	SPI
Verssen	9	GMT
Allen	6	AH
Smith	5	VG
Racier	5	GMT
Total	105	About 40% of the titles
75 Designers with 1 game		
24 with 2, 12 with 3, 14 with 4		

Card Sharks & Blockheads



The Card Driven Wargame tribe gathers at WBC in July and WAM (www.wamconvention.com) each January to play a ton of games and consume a few tons of Andy Nelson's BBQ. The CDW titles are a varied lot: with only three of the sixteen titles in the database having to deal with WWII (only one that touches on the Eastern Front) and still Bulge-free.

One of the metrics on the chart below is the number of Consimworld messages per title. The level of message activity for Card Driven Wargames drastically exceeds that of other wargame genres.

Card Sharks: 16 Card Driven Wargames (CDW): 11 CSR Nominations, 8 Games of the Year

Game	Avg	Ratings	Weight	Consim Msgs #	Msg/ Rating	CSR	Play	Period	Year	Co	Designers
Twilight Struggle	8.3	2,691	3.2	10,890	4	Won	2	Cold	2005	GMT	Gupta/Mathews
Hannibal	8.1	1,334	3.4	3,327	2		2	Anc	1996	AH	Simonitch
Paths of Glory	8.1	1,132	3.9	19,175	17	Won	2	WWI	1999	GMT	Raicer
Here I Stand	8.0	520	4.0	8,165	16	Won	M	Gun	2006	GMT	Beach
Wilderness War	7.9	448	3.3	9,951	22	Won	2	Gun	2001	GMT	Ruhnke
Triumph of Chaos	7.8	136	4.4	4,567	34	Nominee	2	RCW	2005	COA	Dockter
Shifting Sands	7.6	225	3.2	7,595	34	Nominee	2	WWII	2006	MMP	Rinella
We the People	7.6	601	2.9	2,296	4		2	ARW	1994	AH	Herman
For the People	7.5	406	3.6	22,414	55	Won	2	ACW	1998	AH	Herman
Barbarossa to Berlin	7.4	384	3.6	13,736	36	Nominee	2	WWII	2002	GMT	Raicer
Empire of the Sun	7.3	219	4.0	19,085	87	Won	2	WWII	2005	GMT	Herman
Sword of Rome	7.3	404	3.2	6,590	16	Won	M	Anc	2004	GMT	Ferrell
The Napoleonic Wars	7.2	380	3.5	11,327	30	Won	M	NAP	2002	GMT	McLaughlin/Greenwood/Knight
Successors	7.0	269	3.3	1,245	5		M	Anc	1997	AH	Berg/Simonitch
Wellington	7.0	208	3.4	1,577	8		M	NAP	2005	GMT	McLaughlin
Thirty Years War	6.6	275	3.1	6,429	23		2	Gun	2001	GMT	Welker/Fox
Total/Weighted Avg	7.9	9,632	3.4	148,369	15	8/11 Win/Nom			2001	10 GMT	First CDW Designer, Mr. Herman



Similar to the Card Sharks, the Blockheads are very devoted to their genre. Like the CDW tribe, those aficionados of the Block Games organized and held a mini convention in 2004 and 2005 (I believe one year it was sanctioned by WBC). I'm not sure if that convention continues (check it out on consimworld). They are also a Bulge free lot.

I included three games in this category that are not "block" games, but do use a similar game mechanic. GMT now has a number of blockbusters in the genre that was formerly the exclusive domain of Columbia Games.

Blockheads: 19 Block Games: 8 CSR Nominations, 2 Games of the Year

Game	Avg	Ratings	Weight	Consim Msgs #	Msg/ Rating	CSR	Play	Period	Year	Co	Designers
Command & Colors	8.1	2442	2.7	5,262	2	Nominee	2	Anc	2006	GMT	Borg
Hammer of the Scots	7.8	1406	3.0	2,662	2	Nominee	2	Med	2002	Col	Taylor
Europe Engulfed	7.9	619	3.8	11,770	19	Win	2	WWII	2003	GMT	Young, R/Evans
Napoleon	7.3	448	2.4	508	1		2	NAP	1974	AH	Dalgiesh/Gutteridge/Gibson
Crusader Rex	7.5	444	3.1	1,914	4	Nominee	2	Med	2005	Col	Taylor/Dalgiesh
Rommel in the Desert	7.8	409	3.5	684	2		2	WWII	1984	Col	Besinque
East Front	8.0	383	3.8	250	1	Win	2	WWII	1991	Col	Besinque/Dalgiesh
Quebec 1759	7.0	258	2.2	85	0		2	Gun	1972	Col	Dalgiesh/Gutteridge/Brewster
Victory: Blocks of War	6.4	238	2.9	183	1	Nominee	2	WWII	1998	Col	Dalgiesh
Liberty	7.5	199	2.6	1,900	10	Nominee	2	NAP	2003	Col	Dalgiesh/Kwasny
Waterloo	6.2	198	2.9	760	4		2	ARW	2002	Phal	Berg
Pacific Victory	6.9	181	3.7	1,171	6	Nominee	2	WWII	2000	Col	Dalgiesh
Red Storm Rising	6.2	150	2.6	0	0		2	Cold	1989	TSR	Niles
FAB: The Bulge	8.3	131	3.0	522	4		2	WWII	2008	GMT	Young
Bobby Lee	7.1	130	3.1	214	2		2	ACW	1993	Col	Dalgiesh
Eagles: Waterloo	6.5	123	2.1	28	0		2	NAP	1995	Col	Dalgiesh
West Front	6.9	116	3.7	94	1		2	WWII	1992	Col	Besinque
East Front	8.4	113	3.8	250	2		2	WWII	2006	Col	Besinque/Dalgiesh
Clash for Continent	7.6	112	2.2	411	4		2	Gun	2005	Worth	Wylie/Burchfield
Total/Weighted Avg	7.7	8,100	3.0	28,668	4	2/8 Win/Nom			1999		

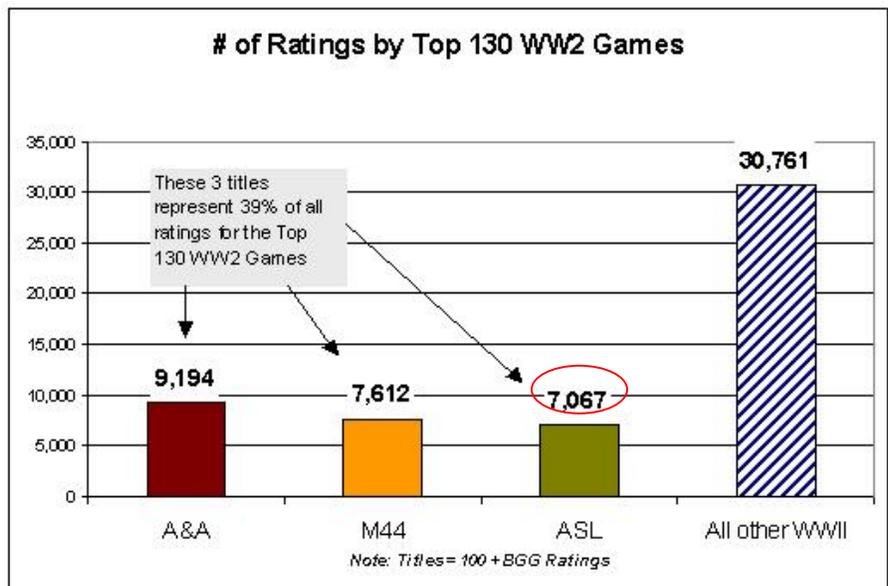
Note: Red Storm Rising, Waterloo and Clash for Continent were placed in this category - eventhough not traditional block game - closest match on mechanic

World War Two Wargames

Overview

The heart and soul of wargaming has been the WWII topic with such titles as World in Flames, Third Reich and Squad Leader. The following four pages of charts review this topic area.

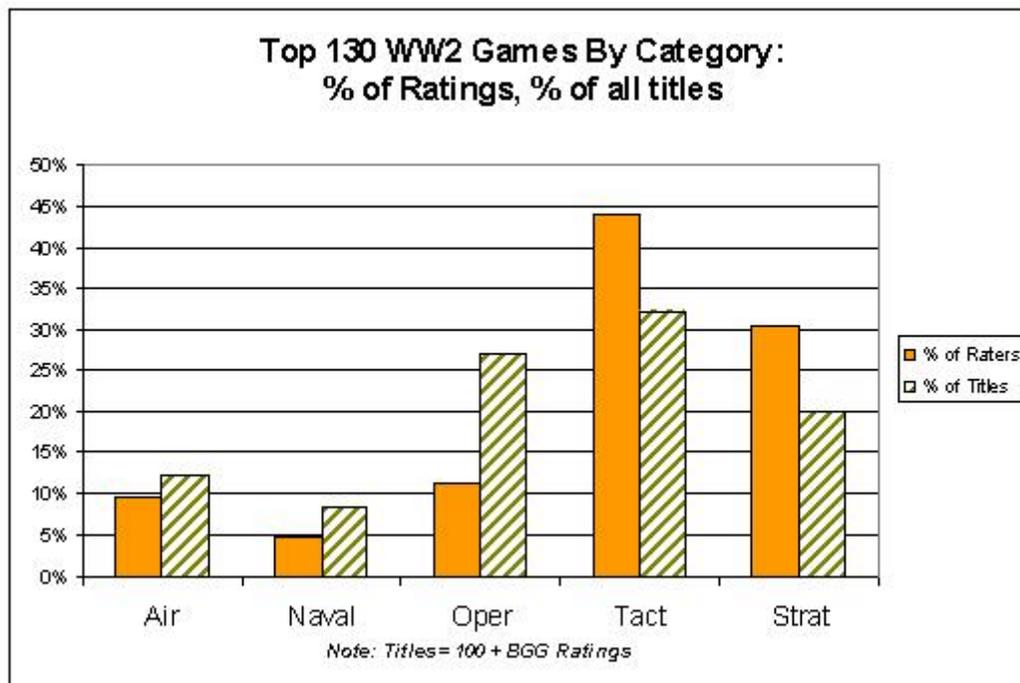
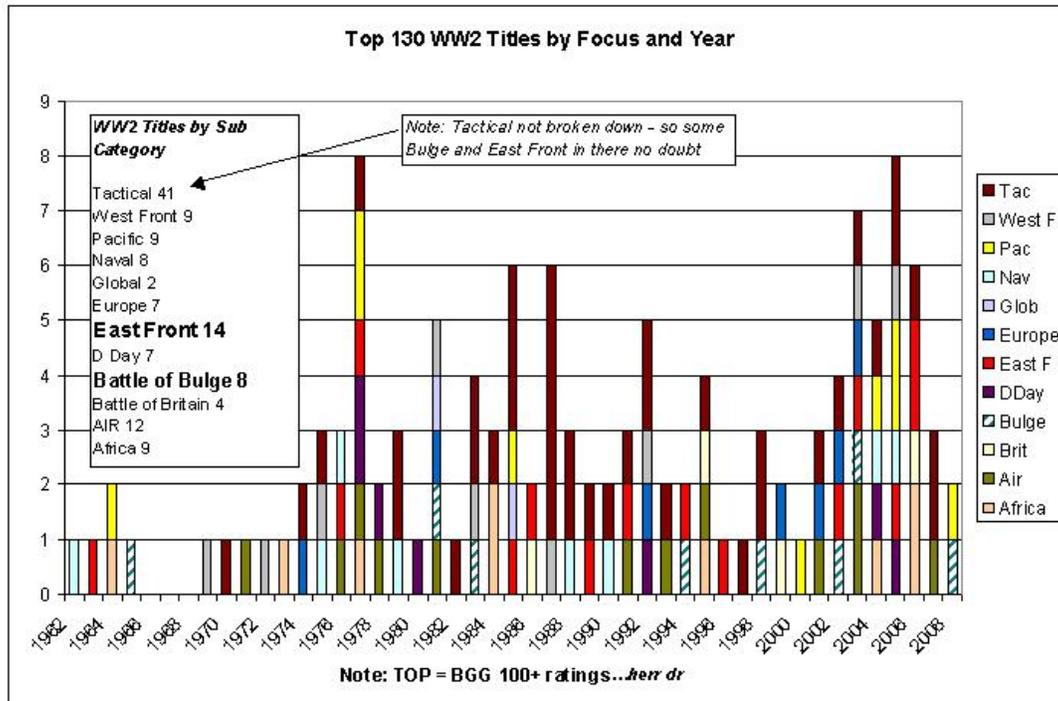
The TOP Two Dozen WW2 Titles by # of ratings on BGG							
Title	Ratings	Avg	Weight	Year	Game Co	Scale	Designer
Axis and Allies	9,194	6.8	2.8	1981	MB	Strategic	Harris
Memoir '44	7,612	7.7	2.2	2004	DOW	Tactical	Borg
Ambush!	1,571	7.2	3.2	1983	VG	Tactical	Smith, EL
Attack!	1,444	6.1	2.5	2003	Eagle	Tactical	Drover
Combat Commander	1,345	8.1	3.3	2006	GMT	Tactical	Jensen
Squad Leader	1,151	7.5	4.0	1977	AH	Tactical	Hill
Advanced Squad Leader	1,136	8	4.7	1985	AH	Tactical	Greenwood
Tide of Iron	1,014	7.9	3.4	2007	FFG	Tactical	multi
Up Front	842	8	3.4	1983	AH	Tactical	Allen
B17	706	6.7	2.3	1981	AH	Air	Frank
ASL..SK1	647	8	3.8	2004	MMP	Tactical	Dunn
3rd Reich	639	6.6	4.3	1974	AH	Strategic	Greenwood
Europe Engulfed	619	7.9	3.8	2003	GMT	Strategic	Young, R
Panzer Blitz	608	6.4	3.2	1970	AH	Tactical	Dunnigan
Panzer Leader	577	6.5	3.2	1974	AH	Tactical	Reed
Russian Campaign	506	7.2	3.1	1977	AH	Strategic	Edwards
World in Flames	491	7.3	4.6	1985	ADG	Strategic	Rowland
Victory in the Pacific	461	7.0	2.4	1977	AH	Strategic	Hamblen
Duel in the Dark	449	7.2	2.5	2007	ZMAN	Air	Pedro
Rommel in the Desert	409	7.8	3.5	1984	Columbia	Strategic	Besinque
War at Sea	408	6.3	1.9	1975	AH	Strategic	Edwards
Breakout Normandy	402	7.8	3.5	1992	AH	Operational	Greenwood
A Victory Lost	401	8.0	2.6	2006	MMP	Operational	Nakamura
Afrika Corps	398	6.0	2.3	1964	AH	Strategic	Roberst, CS
<i>Total/Weighted Avg</i>	<i>33,030</i>	<i>7.3</i>	<i>2.9</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>11 AH</i>	<i>9 of top 11 are Tactical</i>	

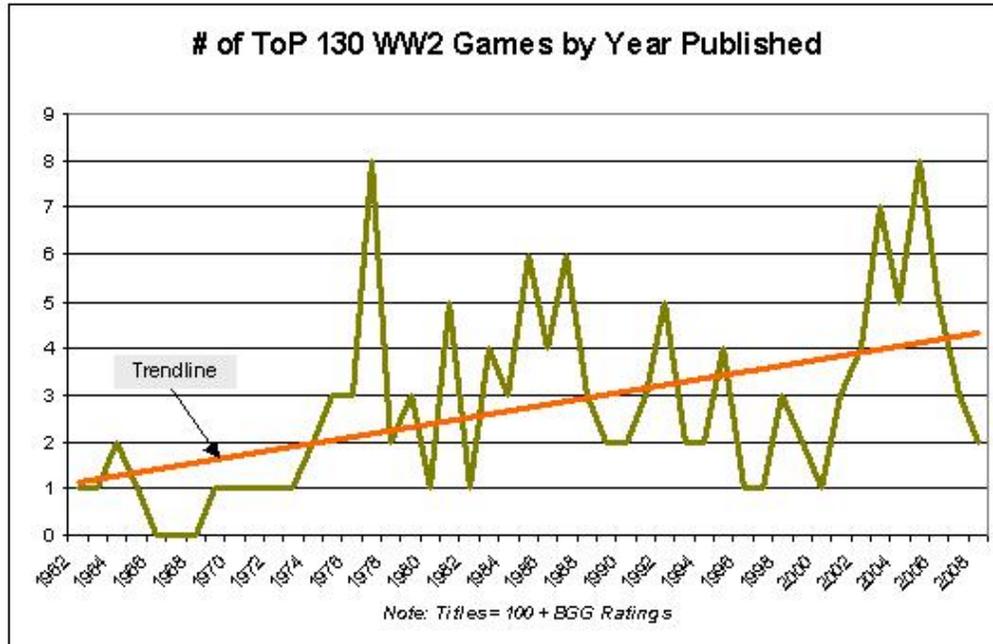


Note: The difference is that the top table only includes stats for ASL, while the chart below includes all the ASL modules, expansions, etc.

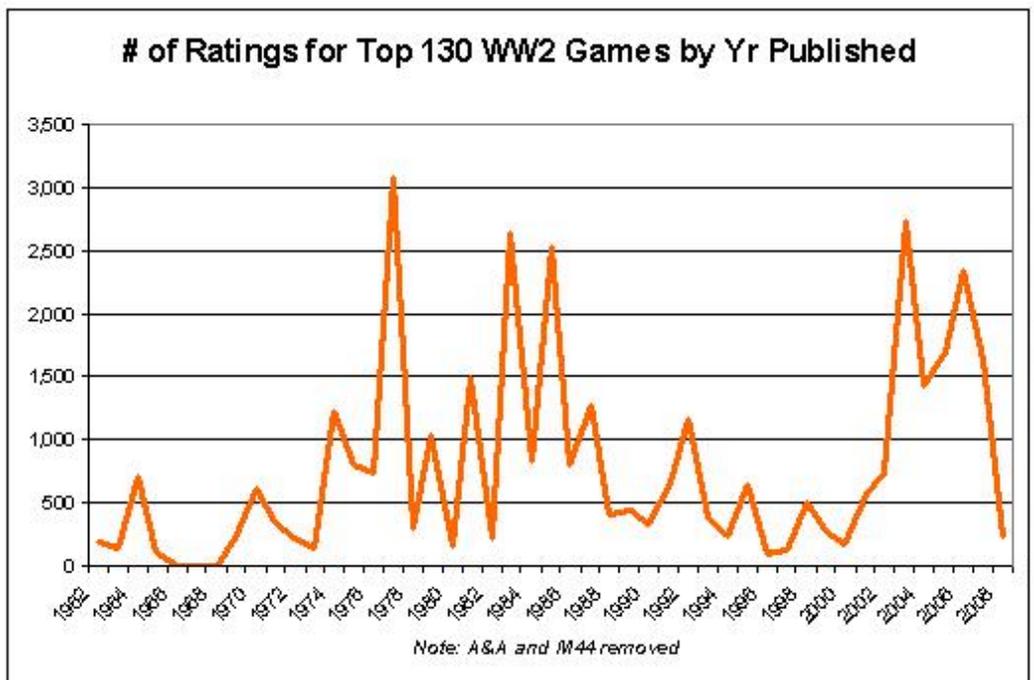
The Bulge, an East Front, a few burning carriers and some other stuff.

We frequently hear there are about a 'bazzillion' games regarding the Battle of the Bulge and the WWII Eastern Front. Since 2002, 5 East Front and 3 Bulge games (out of 66 Top wargames published post 2002) have cracked the Top 130 WW2 Wargames: the topics remain popular.





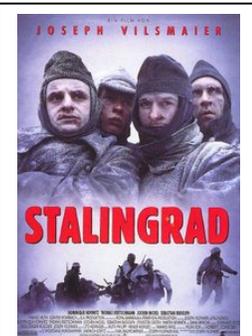
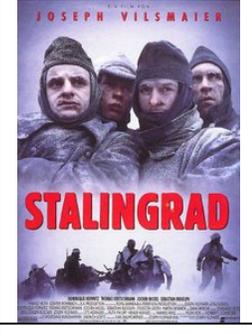
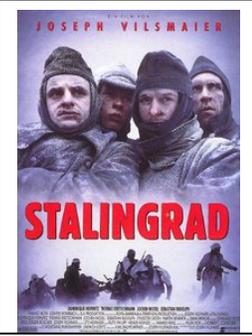
These two charts also demonstrate that the WW2 market remains quite vibrant. Of course, these charts are ONLY a function of the ratings in the BGG database. How they relate to sales or actual number of players remains a mystery. I removed the ratings for Axis and Allies and M44 on the chart below better show the underlying trend.



Topics Covered: Top WW2 Wargames

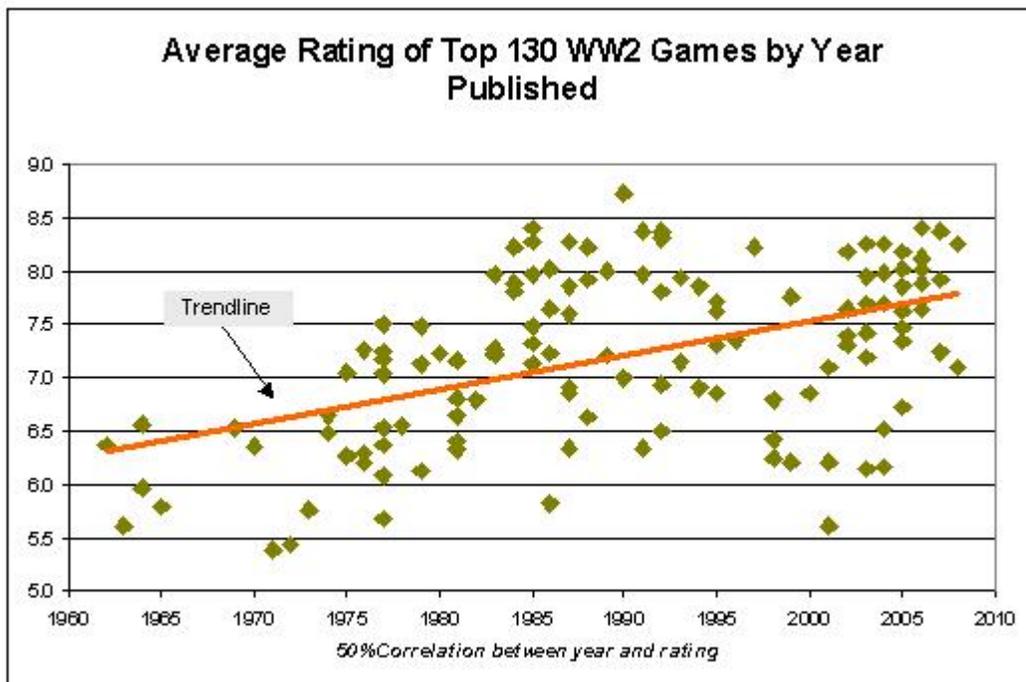
		1994 > 2008 List of Top 266 Wargames (WW2) by Year, Topic and Game Cluster														
		1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Tactical			ASL Sol (OG)		ASL-PB(OG)	V Block (M)	Panz G (M)			Bat Cards(M)	Adv Tob (OG)	Attack(M)	ASL1 (OG)	ASL2 (OG)	ASL3 (OG)	
													M44 (Rec)	LNL (YG)	Tide (Rec)	
Europe																
Bulge																
East Front																
Pacific																
West Front																
Africa																
Air																
Naval																

Key to Game Cluster Codes (page 8) (see: OG = Old Guard, YG = Young Guard, REC = Recruit, R = Regular, M = Militia, E = Engineer)





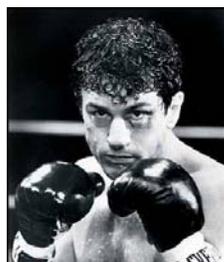
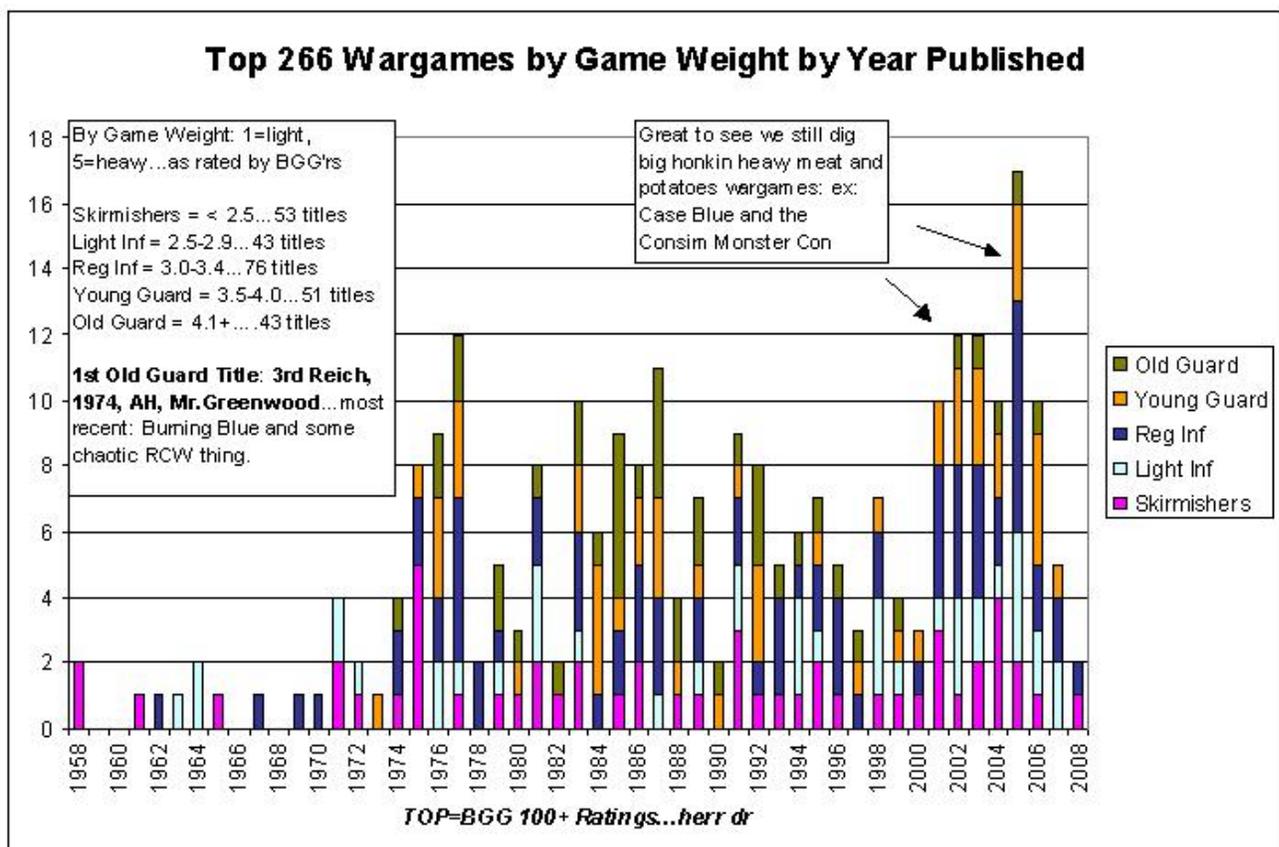
A couple of pictures from BGG (another great component of that tool);
ASL at WBC 2007 and WiF at Allied HQ in 1944.



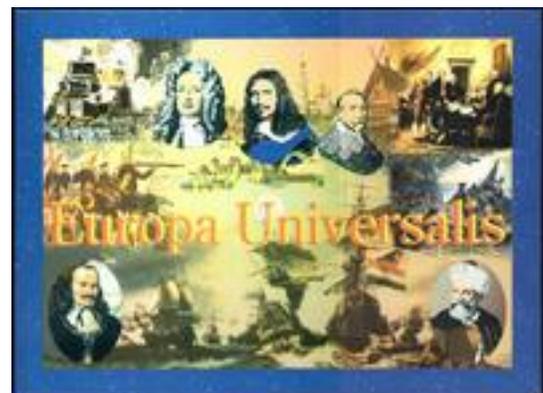
A typical “it could mean any number of things” chart. Games getting better? Grade inflation? Designers giving the mob what they want? Who knows? However the chart does reflect 130 games and about 54,000 ratings, so I would be inclined to say the games are getting “better”: less downtime between player moves, more player interaction, improved production quality, increased accessibility, more insight into a topic (depending of course on how the topic is covered) and more fun.

Heavyweights

One of the more controversial metrics in the BGG database is “Weight”. The term is supposed to reflect how “beefy” a game is: complexity, depth of player decisions required, richness of the gaming experience, etc. One issue frequently mentioned is that such a general measure for all of these components gives a potential player no idea if the rules are complex or mind numbing decisions or exactly what is at play. However one defines game “weight”, wargames would be the ones to break the scale. Wargamers general believe that the beefier (read complexity, topic flavor and decisions that a player is required to make) the game, the better. The industry has been turning out one about one heavyweight (*game weight of 4.1 or higher – called an Old Guard game for purposes of the chart below – note: not to be confused with the cluster analysis provided earlier*). I think that the most interesting thing about the chart is the range of game weight titles being introduce each year; something for about everyone. Anyways, three pages of game weight charts follow...

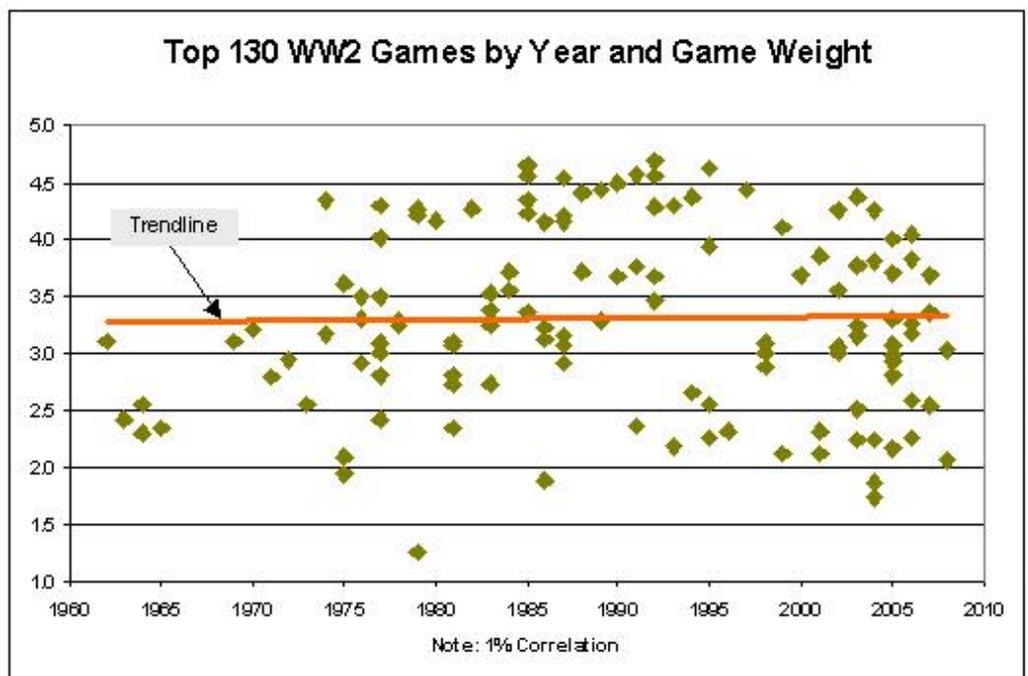


The two “heaviest” games in the HD database.

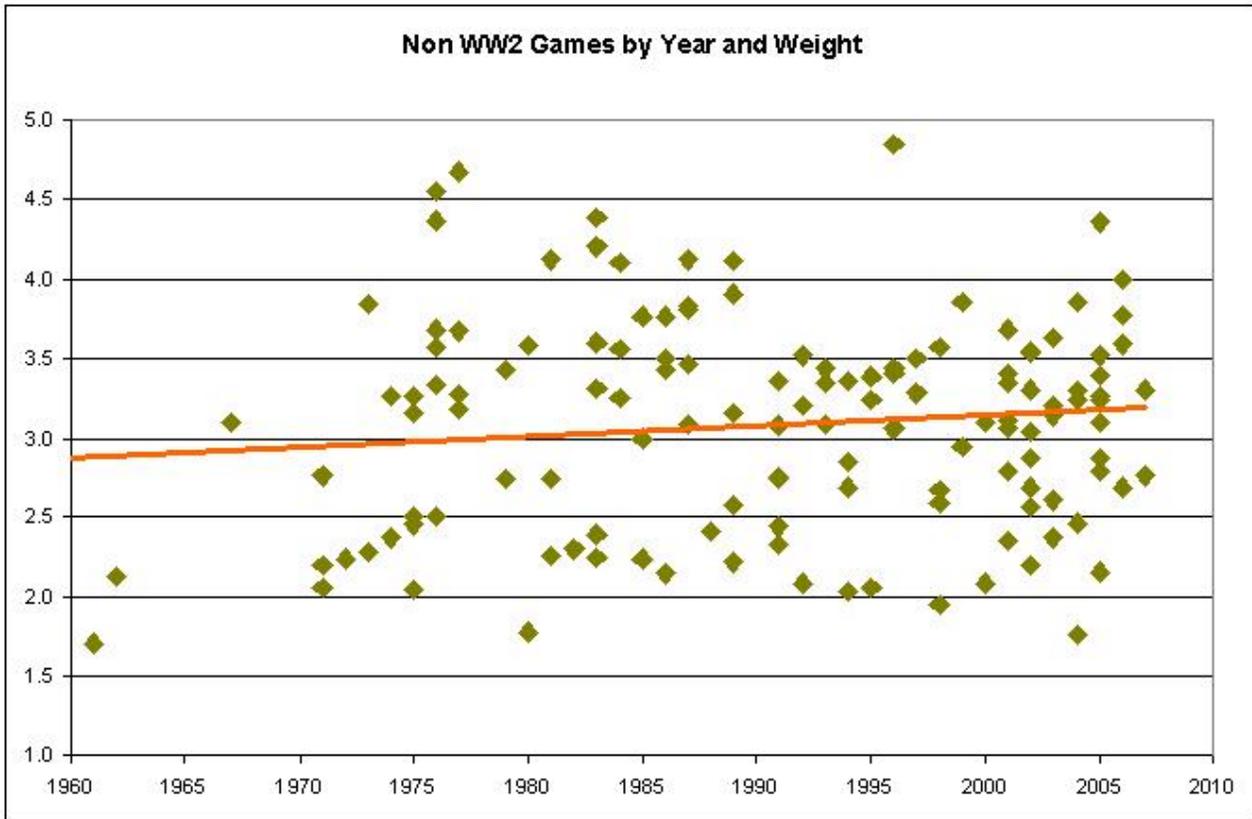
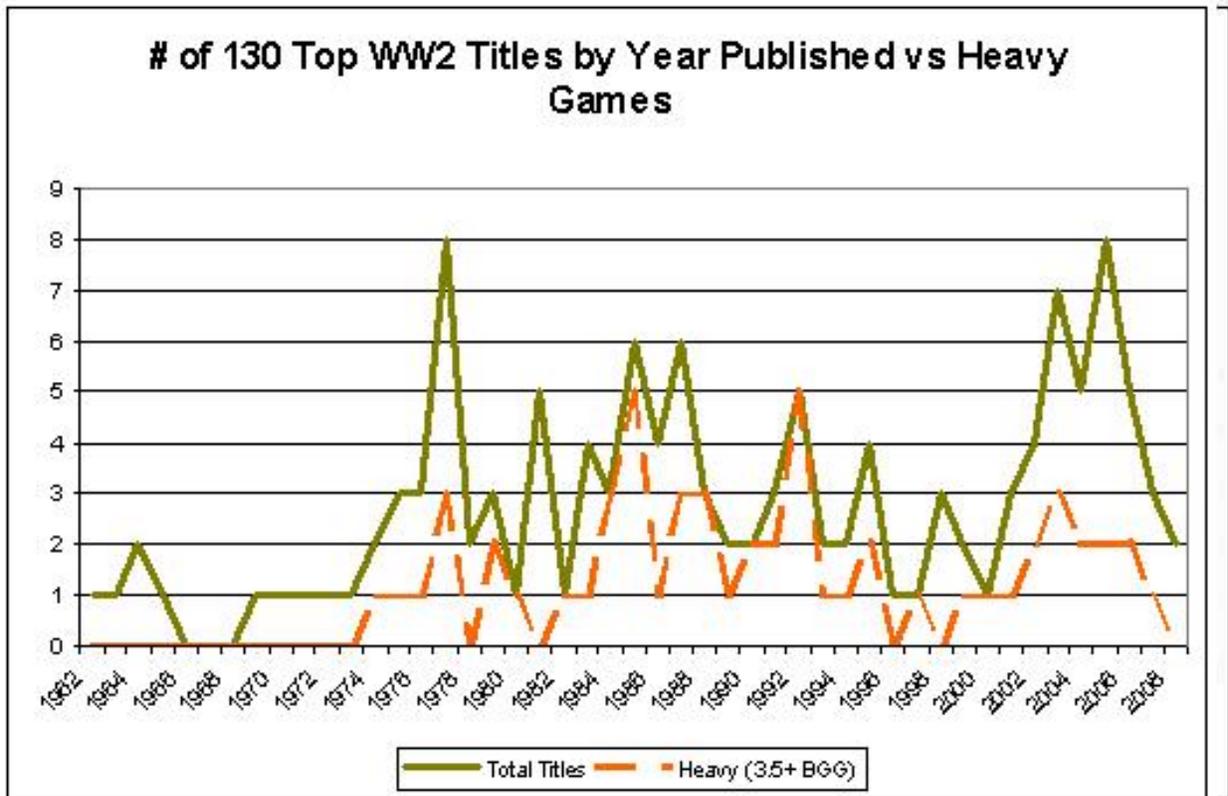


Top Dozen Heavyweight Champs: WW2							
Title	Ratings	Avg	Weight	Year	Game Co	Scale	Designer
Advanced Squad Leader	1,136	8.0	4.7	1985	AH	Tactical	Greenwood
World in Flames	491	7.3	4.6	1985	ADG	Strategic	Rowland
Advanced Third Reich	346	6.5	4.5	1992	AH	Strategic	Harper
Whistling Death	147	8.3	4.4	2003	COA	Air	Webster
Enemy at the Gates	102	7.9	4.4	1994	Gamers	Operational	Essig
3rd Reich	639	6.6	4.3	1974	AH	Strategic	Greenwood/Prados
Pacific War	186	7.5	4.3	1985	VG	Strategic	Herman
Flat Top	332	7.2	4.3	1977	AH	Naval	Taylor
DAK2	110	8.3	4.3	2004	MMP	Operational	Essig
Longest Day	161	7.2	4.2	1979	AH	Operational	Reed
Totaler Krieg!	163	7.8	4.1	1999	DG	Strategic	Emrich/Kosakowski
Burning Blue	141	8.1	4.1	2006	GMT	Air	Brimmicombe-Wood
<i>Total/Weighted Avg</i>	<i>3,954</i>	<i>7.4</i>	<i>4.5</i>	<i>1986</i>			

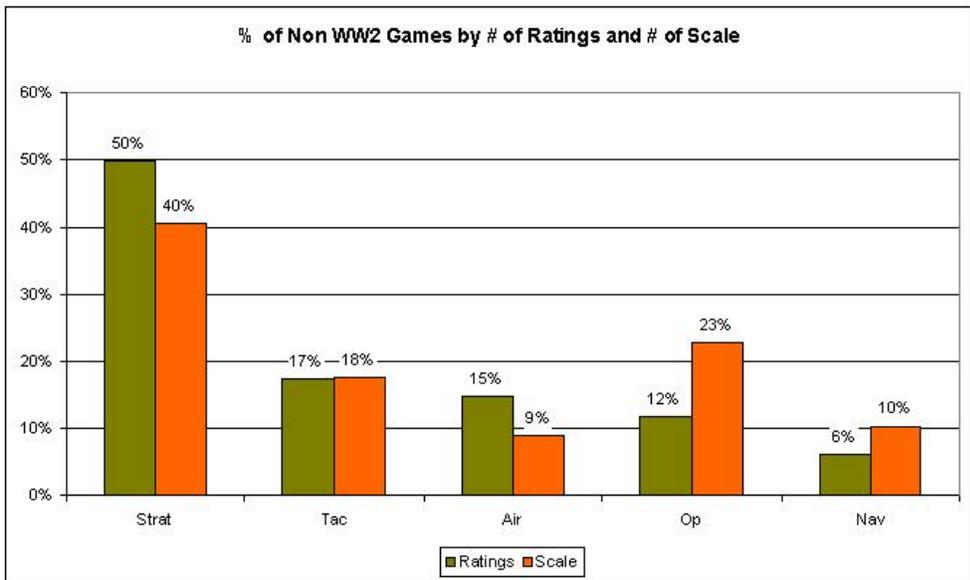
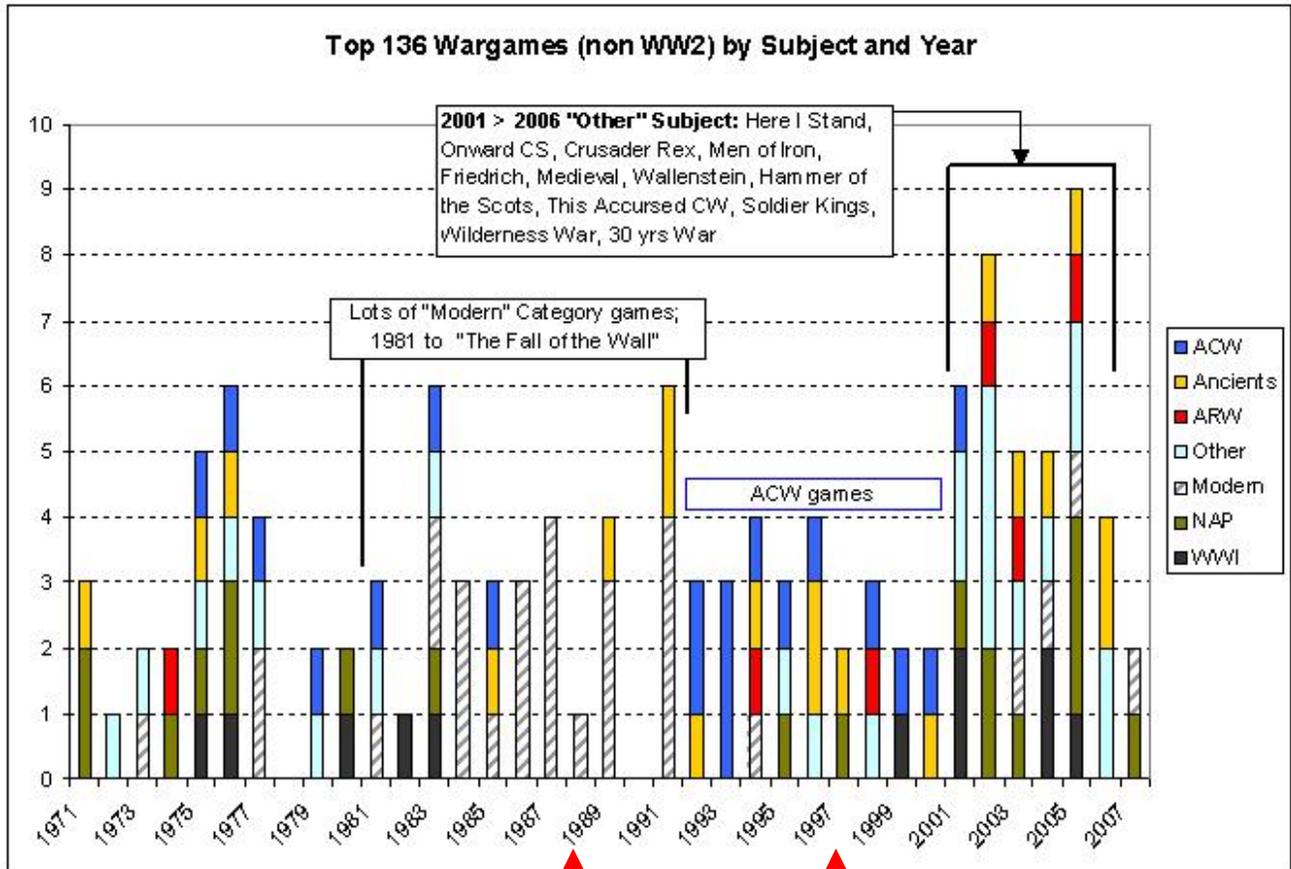
Note: ASL Modules and Squad Leader not included (since parent game ASL is included)



Top Dozen Heavyweight Champs: Non WW2								
Title	Ratings	Avg	Weight	Year	Game Co	Scale	Period	Designer
Europa Universalis	126	6.6	4.8	1996	Azure	Strategic	Middle	Thibault
Air War	149	4.8	4.7	1977	SPI	Air	Mod	Nisby
Terrible Swift Sword	119	7.0	4.5	1976	SPI	Operational	ACW	Berg
Empires In Arms	487	7.5	4.4	1983	ADG	Strategic	NAP	Rowland/Pinder
Wellington's Victory	115	7.0	4.4	1976	SPI	Operational	NAP	Davis
Triumph of Chaos	136	7.8	4.4	2005	COA	Strategic	RCW	Dockter
Gulf Strike	144	6.1	4.2	1983	VG	Operational	Mod	Herman
Harpoon	111	6.3	4.1	1981	GDW	Air/Naval	Mod	Bond
Central America	105	5.4	4.1	1987	VG	Strategic	Mod	McQuaid
Siege of Jerusalem	237	7.1	4.1	1989	AH	Operational	Ancient	Sinigaglio/Schachter/Weiss
Vietnam 1965-1975	189	7.1	4.1	1984	VG	Strategic	Mod	Karp
Here I Stand	520	8.0	4.0	2006	GMT	Strategic	Gunpow	Beach
<i>Total/Weighted Avg</i>	<i>2,438</i>	<i>7.1</i>	<i>4.3</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>3 SPI</i>			



Non World War Two Wargames

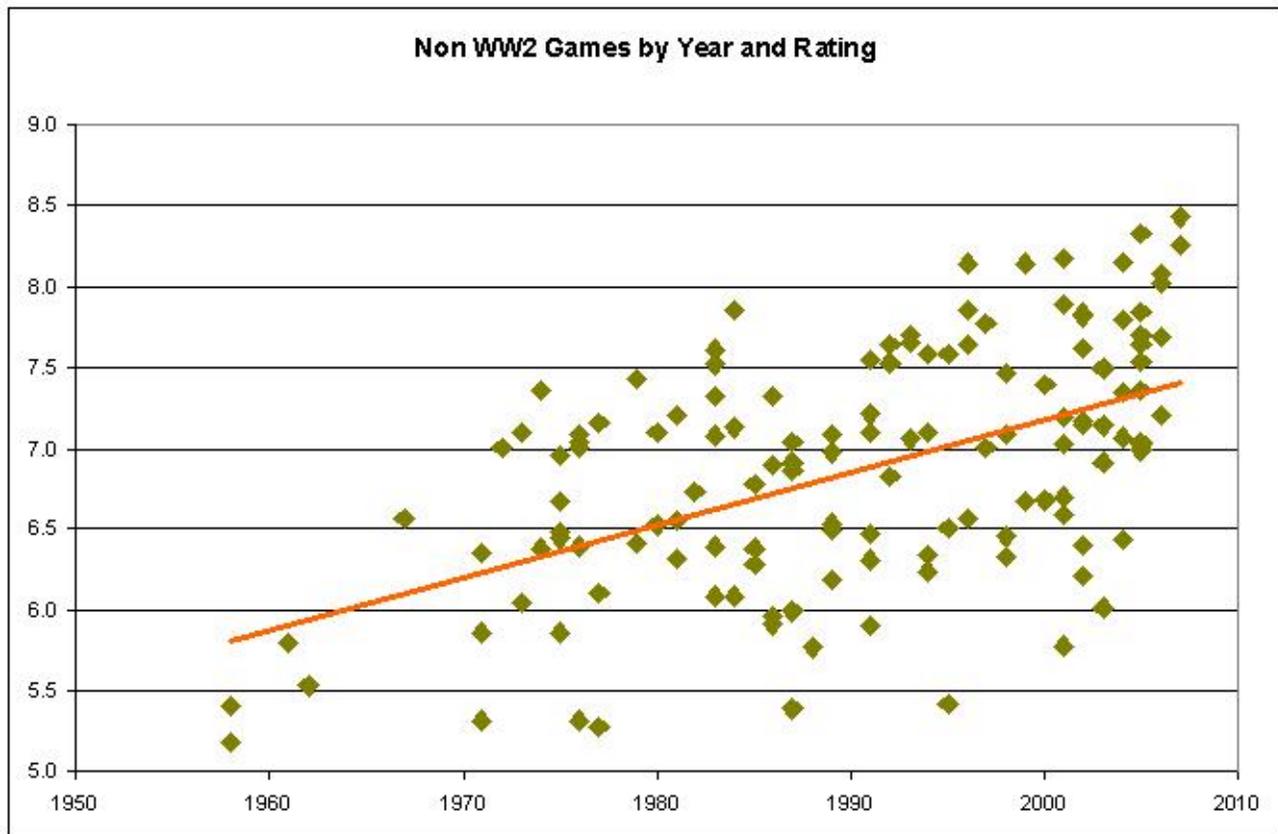


The answer to Mr. Rawling's original question: Yes, ACW games appear to have dropped off according to this data. Interesting to note the same regarding Modern games after the "fall of the Wall".

While the Vietnam War remains a relatively sparsely covered subject, especially at the strategic level (*Mr. Karp's Vietnam 1965-1975* and *Mr. Costello's Victory in Vietnam II* are about the only two titles I can recall), no game covering an American conflict since (ex: Gulf I or Gulf II) has cracked the Top Wargame database. Any designer would face some strong headwind issues by tackling such "recent" subjects and would need to "tread carefully". Nonetheless, a strategic level simulation integrating both the military and political dimensions of those conflicts would seem to hold the potential to offer insight regarding current events. Contrast this lack of coverage with the significant number of titles regarding a potential World War III that were generated during the height of the Cold War.

The TOP Two Dozen Non WW2 Titles by # of ratings on BGG

Title	Ratings	Avg	Weight	Year	Game Co	Scale	Period	Designer
Wings of War	3,994	7.1	1.8	2004	FFG	Air	WWI	Angiolino/Page
Twilight Struggle	2,691	8.3	3.2	2005	GMT	Strategic	Mod	Gupta/Mathews
Command & Colors	2,442	8.1	2.7	2006	GMT	Tactical	Ancient	Borg
Wallenstein	1,939	7.8	3.3	2002	Queen	Strategic	Middle	Henn
Battle Cry	1,791	7.4	2.1	2000	AH	Tactical	ACW	Borg
Hammer of the Scots	1,406	7.8	3.0	2002	Columbia	Strategic	Middle	Taylor
Hannibal: Rome vs Carthage	1,334	8.1	3.4	1996	AH	Strategic	Ancient	Simonitch
Paths of Glory	1,132	8.1	3.9	1999	GMT	Strategic	WWI	Raicer
Aces of Aces	1,061	7.1	1.8	1980	Nova	Air	WWI	Leonardi
Friedrich	776	7.8	3.3	2004	RGG	Strategic	Gunpow	Sivel
Wooden Ships & Iron Men	765	7.0	3.3	1975	AH	Naval	NAP	Taylor
A House Divided	691	7.2	2.7	1981	GDW	Strategic	ACW	Chadwick
We the People	601	7.6	2.9	1994	AH	Strategic	ARW	Herman
Bonaparte at Marengo	592	7.7	3.3	2005	Simmons	Operational	NAP	Simmons
Here I Stand	520	8.0	4.0	2006	GMT	Strategic	Gunpow	Beach
Age of Napoleon	511	7.1	3.1	2003	Phalanx	Strategic	NAP	Verlaque
Empires in Arms	487	7.5	4.4	1983	ADG	Strategic	NAP	Rowland/Pinder
Byzantium	480	7.0	3.5	2005	Warfrog	Strategic	Ancient	Wallace
Machiavelli	465	7.2	3.2	1977	AH	Strategic	Middle	Taylor/Wood
Wilderness War	448	7.9	3.3	2001	GMT	Strategic	Gunpow	Ruhnke
Napoleon	448	7.3	2.4	1974	AH	Operational	NAP	Dalgiesh/Gutteridge/Gibson
Crusader Rex	444	7.5	3.1	2005	Columbia	Strategic	Middle	Taylor
For the People	406	7.5	3.6	1998	AH	Strategic	ACW	Herman
War and Peace	406	6.5	3.6	1980	AH	Strategic	NAP	McLaughlin/Greenwood/Knight
<i>Total/Weighted Avg</i>	25,830	7.6	2.9	1999	8 AH			





Stop by www.consimworld.com to discuss this article; I've started a topic there titled Wargames: Industry Statistics, Analysis and Trends within the Consim Chat area.

An attempt to communicate

When I shared this piece with a great gaming friend of mine, he asked, “*So, now that you’ve burned a few days of your life on this stuff, what did you learn?*” First, a few observations, and then some friendly suggestions.

Observations

1) Our hobby turns out a TON of content. Just looking at these 266 titles, and I although I was aware of the vast majority of the games, I was still stunned by the diversity and magnitude of the content. And, yet, it resides, for the most part, with a very small sliver of public – let alone the gaming community. So, how can we share the wealth? More on that below.

2) Our hobby looks healthy. 2005 produced 18 games (out of roughly 120 published that year) that made the database. We are in the second golden age of wargaming. It does not appear that the emergence and prevalence of new mechanic genres has meant the end of hex and potatoes gaming; rather the two seem to be complementing each other. I would guess that new gamers begin with one of the other genres and slowly build up the courage to jump into hex infested waters. 2007 seems like a “down year”, but, it is too soon to tell since it usually takes a couple of years for most of the gems to be discovered and gain traction. Another BGG functionality that would have been great to slap into the TOA Database would have been the dates when the actual ratings for particular games were entered. This would provide some data on the momentum of particular games; is a title gaining or losing altitude?

3) Recently, designers have produced a number of outstanding entry level wargames.

4) Card Driven Wargames rock. The genre Mr.Herman invented and Mr.Raicer helped explode has tremendous impact on how we game. I actually place their innovations in the same class as those that arrived with the birth of the hobby. Part of the reason the CDWs rock is that they capitalized on the seven stage rocket mentioned below.

5) BGG is an outstanding tool for the hobby. I spent just a few minutes grabbing data from the publicly available database and was able to conduct a significant amount of analysis regarding trends in wargaming that I didn’t think was possible. I hope the BGG crew continues with their

effort to upgrade accessibility to data with their database (ex: being able to easily extract the number and composition of the international market, the date when a rating was made, etc).

6) The Invisible Political Dimension. The political dimension of the conflicts we game are still, for the most part, not being baked into our wargames. A few games have recently tackled the political dimension (ex: Here I Stand and Triumph of Chaos), but most designers still seem to steer clear of including design mechanisms to force players to grapple with the political dynamics and constraints that their historical counterparts faced. I explored this topic in an issue of ATO (#13, September 2005, Of Politics, War and Gaming) and it has also been the subject of a number of excellent BGG lists (6478 and 4635 as a place to start).

7) Significant international audience. Of the games I sampled (CDWs), roughly ½ of those rating the games were from outside the States. Another useful stat for the BGG game pages would be a simple table showing ownership by nation.

8) The Seven Stage Rocket. I can't image introducing a design that is not available for a Cyberboard or Vassal (Stage 1 & 2). Both these tools tremendously expand the audience for a game and frequency of how much they are played. BGG and Consimworld (Stage 3 & 4) provide the opportunity for designers to support their games and help build a community around their titles. Complementing this are the strong trade magazines like ATO (Stage 5). Toss in a tourney at WBC (Stage 6) and inclusion in the hobby's library (www.grognard.com) (Stage 7) and these games have tremendous advantages in reaching an audience that their forerunners lacked.



Suggestions

1) Sharing the wealth. One of the best innovations I have stumbled across recently are the YouTube videos that explain how to play a particular game. One great example of “the movement” is at www.boardgameswithscott.com I am also a big fan of the wargame podcasts at www.point3pointsource.com I learn to play games by people explaining them to me; I'm often too lazy to read rules. So, why shouldn't game designers take a few minutes, record a podcast or videocast explaining their games and include a link in the rulebook? Or how about a central repository of the stuff (similar to what the outstanding crew at Limey Yank Games have done with the Vassal modules <http://loakes.game-host.org/limeyyankgames/index.php>)? I actually have no idea how to make a video or podcast, but one of the great things about this hobby is that everyone tends to lend a hand (the GMs, the saints that design the Vassal and Cyberborad modules, etc). So, any designer would only need to post something on consimworld and I'd suspect the cavalry will arrive.

2) Accessibility. How to make these wargame beasts more accessible? A friend of mine plays in one of the many massive online games; 10,000 people participating in one game. Of course, historical strategy wargames will never be as accessible as sitting down in front of a computer and immediately start whacking things, but there are probably a number of steps in game design that could lower the barrier to beginning play including:

- Video/podcasts mentioned above
- Inclusion of quick start, “start here” and “programmed” rules

- At least one fun and compelling short scenario than has received as much design attention as the campaign game (ex: The Wilderness War model)
- Easy setup (setup info on the game map and/or game pieces) or variable set up
- Making components less language dependent – more icons. I’ve noticed that in many of the CDWs more and more text is being written on the card. Frequently, due to the tremendous amount that CDWs get played, errata is generated. And, the more information that resides on the card, the more difficult players find it to make the corrections (something I guess we gamers were all taught: Don’t color on the walls and don’t write on the cards). Pushing more card text into the living rules would make sense.
- Less counters, more wood. Those small counter font size number is getting more difficult for us with failing eyesight and is an entry barrier for new players.

Of course many of these ideas have been tried before. As I look at the “Recruit” cluster of games, the barriers to jumping in and playing them are much lower than our beloved heavyweights. But, it’s more than just reduced complexity; it’s how the designers of these Recruit games approach the topic. I guess I am just making the renewed call for more accessibility. Something, I should have better kept in mind with the one beast I designed.

3) Industry clearinghouse for data. I would have MUCH rather utilized sales volumes as the basis for this analysis than the raw game ratings. But, we are where we are. MOST other industries have some clearinghouse for industry data. I can’t understand why our small co-op doesn’t do the same thing. All it takes is for a couple of the large game co’s to kick the process off. In the meantime, I’ll start a topic area on Consimworld (see note on page 29).

4) P-500 Common Practices. One thing I stumbled across in the course of the analysis was the variance in P-500 practices prevalent in the industry (ex: how long some games have been in the BGG database and have not yet been published). The P-500 both saved the industry, providing designers with more opportunity to cover off-the-beaten-track topics and created significant pressure on storefront retailers. I would think that some industry self regulation and standards (Only charge when shipping? When taking the pre-order?, etc) – and making those widely know to the wargame community - would go a long way to avoiding in any potentially very disruptive problems that may arise with the P-500.

5) Keep the rich/complex games comin’. One thing that struck me going thru TOA Database was the number of recently introduced and popular “heavy” games. Demand appears to be growing as evidenced by the buzz around a number of recently introduced, and soon to be published, wargames. And this in the “Age of the Eurogame”. Gamers dig rich game experiences offered by epic wargames. There hasn’t been a BIG new meaty title on the American Civil War or American Revolutionary War, just to name two topics, in quite awhile. So, someone, get crackin.

6)...and transitional games (the Young Guard game cluster). As indicated in the game cluster analysis I conducted, titles that provide new gamers with a transition path from the Recruit games to the deep an cold waters of our heavy wargames are required. It is a very tough design assignment – to hit a complexity spot that will not intimidate new gamers and still grab grognards.

In closing, if anyone would be interested in assisting with the database (like helping to extract more interesting data from BGG), drop me a line. And, again, **a BIG thank you to BoardGameGeek** and the tremendous tool they have made available to the gaming public.

Games in the TOA Database



Distribution of Top 266 Wargames by Number of Ratings

Range in # of Ratings	Games	%	Ratings	%	R/G	Avg(s) Year
100 > 125	60	23%	6,684	7%	111	1992
126 > 175	61	23%	8,921	9%	146	1989
176 > 250	61	23%	12,798	13%	210	1989
251 > 500	52	20%	18,624	19%	358	1988
501 > 1500	24	9%	20,623	21%	859	1991
1500+	8	3%	31,234	32%	3,904	1998

The following list of 266 Top wargames games comprises the TOA Database. I'll be pruning it, adding new titles from time to time (there are some notable exceptions) and slapping in new data fields. Any assistance or constructive suggestions would be much appreciated.

Title	Year	Pub	Designer	Designer	Designer	Title	Year	Pub	Designer	Designer	Designer
1776	1974	AH	Reed			Blue vs. Gray	1999	GMT	Jones		
2nd Fleet	1986	VG	Balkoski			Robby Lee	1993	Columbia	Dalgiesh		
5th Fleet	1989	VG	Balkoski			Bonaparte at Marengo	2005	Simmons	Simmons		
7th Fleet	1987	VG	Balkoski			Breakout Normandy	1992	AH	Greenwood		
A Victory Lost	2006	MMP	Nakamura			Burning Blue. The Byzantium	2006	GMT	Brimmicombe-Wood		
Aces of Aces (FM, HRDE, HRS,PS)	1980	Nova	Leonardi			Caesar at Alesia	1976	AH	Wallace		
Across 5 Aprils	1992	VG	Smith			Caesar's Legions	1975	AH	Greenwood/Wiseman		
Advanced Squad Leader (ASL)	1985	AH	Greenwood								
Advanced Squad Leader (ASL) Starter Kit #1	2004	MMP	Dunn			Campaign	1971	Parker Bro	Waddington		
Advanced Squad Leader (ASL) Starter Kit #2	2005	MMP	Dunn			Carrier	1990	VG	Southard		
Advanced Squad Leader (ASL) Starter Kit #3	2007	MMP	Dunn			Central America	1987	VG	McQuaid		
Advanced Third Reich	1992	AH	Harper			Civil War, the	1983	VG	Smith		
						Clash for a Continent: Battles of the American Revolution and French & Indian War	2005	Worthington	Wylie	Burchfield	
Advanced Tobruk	2002	Critical Hit	Tapio			Clash of Giants	2001	GMT	Raicer		
Afrika - 2nd Edition	2006	MMP	Essig			Close Action	1997	COA	Campbell		
Afrika Korps	1964	AH	Roberst, CS			Cobra	1977	SPI	Hessel		
Age of Napoleon	2003	Phalanx	Verlaque								
Air Assault On Crete/Invasion of Malta-1942	1977	AH	Reed	Borries		Code of Bushido - ASL Module 8	1991	AH			
Air Force	1976	AH	Taylor			Combat Commander: Eur, Med, Para	2006	GMT	Jensen		
Air Force Dauntless Expansion Kit	1978	AH	Taylor			Commands & Colors: Anc, Exp Packs 1,	2006	GMT	Borg		
Air Strike	1987	GDW	Webster			Conquistador	1976	SPI	Berg		
Air Superiority	1987	GDW	Webster			Corsairs and Hellcats	2003	GMT	Verssen		
Air War	1977	SPI	Nisby			Crescendo of Doom	1979	AH	Greenwood		
Alexander the Great	1971	AH	Greenwood	Gygax		Croix de Guerre - ASL Module 10	1992	AH			
Ambush! (A,MO, PH, Ss)	1983	VG	Smith, EL			Cross of Iron	1979	AH	Hill		
American Civil War, The	2001	Eagle	Drover			Crusader Rex	2005	Columbia	Taylor	Dalgiesh	
Anzio	1969	AH	Oleson	Williams,D		Cry Havoc	1981	Eurogames	Webster	Chalk	
Arab-Israeli Wars, The	1977	AH	Vane	Caras		DAK2	2004	MMP	Essig		
Ardennes	1994	Gamers	Essig			Dauntless	1977	AH	Taylor		
Ardennes '44	2003	GMT	Simonitch			Dawn Patrol	1982	TSR	Carr		
Attack Sub	1991	AH	Allen			D-Day	1977	AH			
Attack! + Expansion	2003	Eagle	Drover			Desert War	1984	AH	Allen		
Axis and Allies: MB, new, Nav, BoB, D Day,	1981	MB	Harris			Dixie - Bull Run	1994	Columbia	Dalgiesh		
						Downtown: Air War Over Hanoi, 1965-1972	2004	GMT	Brimmicombe-Wood		
B-17: Queen of the Skies	1981	AH	Frank			Duel in the Dark	2007	ZMAN	Pedro		
Banzai	1984	AH	Allen			Eagles: Waterloo	1995	Columbia	Dalgiesh		
Battle Cry	2000	AH	Borg			EastFront	1991	Columbia	Besinque	Dalgiesh	
Battle for Germany	1975	SPI	Dunnigan			EastFront II	2006	Columbia	Dalgiesh	Besinque	
Battle for Moscow	1986	GDW	Chadwick			Eighth Air Force	1995	GMT	Verssen		
Battle Hymn	1986	VG	Smith, EL	Reiser		Empire of the Sun	2005	GMT	Herman		
Battle of Britain	1999	TSR	Borg			Empires in Arms	1983	ADG	Rowland	Pinder	
Battle of the Bulge	1981	AH	Singaglio	Uhl		Empires of the Ancient World	2000	Warfrog	Wallace		
Battle of the Bulge	1965	AH									
Battlecards: World Conflict, Western European Theatre	2001	DG	Bjork			Enemy at the Gates	1994	Gamers	Essig		
Battle-Cry	1961	MB				Europa Universalis	1996	Azure	Thibault		
Battles for the Ardennes	1983	SPI	Parker			Europe Engulfed	2003	GMT	Young, R	Evans	
Beyond Valor - ASL Module 1	1985	AH				FAB: The Bulge	2008	GMT	Young		
						Fire in the Sky: The Great Pacific War, 1941-1945	2005	MMP	Nakamura		
Bismarck	1962	AH	Roberst, CS	Shaw	Uhl	Firepower	1984	AH	Taylor		
Bitter Woods	1998	AH	Heller			First World War, The	2004	Phalanx	Raicer		
Bitter Woods (4th Edition)	2002	L2	Heller			Flat Top	1977	AH	Taylor		
Blue & Gray	1975	SPI				Flight Leader	1986	AH	Morgan		
Blue Max	1983	GDW	Hall	Harshman							

Title	Year	Pub	Designer	Designer	Designer	Title	Year	Pub	Designer	Designer	Designer
Flying Colors	2005	GMT	Nagel			Pax Romana	2006	GMT	Berg		
For the People	1998	AH	Herman			Pegasus Bridge - ASL Historical Module 4	1997	AH			
Fortress Europa	1978	AH	Edwards	Hambleton	Moon	Peloponnesian War	1991	VG	Herman		
France, 1940	1972	SPI	Dunnigan			Platoon	1986	AH	Taylor		
Frederick the Great	1975	SPI	Davis	Curran		Quebec 1759	1972	Columbia	Dalgiesh	Gutteridge	Brewster
Friedrich	2004	RGG	Sivel			RAF	1986	West End	Butterfield		
Geronimo	1995	AH	Berg			Raid on St. Nazaire	1987	AH	Seaman	Markham	
Gettysburg	1958	AH	Roberts,CS			Red Barricades - ASL Historical Module 1	1990	AH	Kibler		
Gettysburg - 125th Anniversary Edition	1998	AH	Taylor			Red Storm Rising	1989	TSR	Niles		
Gettysburg, 1977 Ed.	1977	AH	Uhl			Reds! The Russian Civil War 1918-1921	2001	GMT	Raicer	Ruhnke	
Gr. Anvil of Victory	1982	AH	Greenwood			Rise and Decline of the Third Reich	1974	AH	Greenwood	Prados	
Grant Takes Command	2001	MMP	Balkoski	Beach		Rise of the Luftwaffe	1993	GMT	Verssen		
Great Battles of Alexander, the	1991	GMT	Herman			Rise of the Roman Republic, the - The Ancient World: Vol. 1	2003	GMT	Berg		
Great Battles of Alexander, The: Deluxe Edition	1996	GMT	Berg	Herman		Roads to Gettysburg	1993	AH	Balkoski		
Great Battles of Julius Caesar, the (the Civil Wars 48-45 B.C.)	1994	GMT	Berg	Herman		Rommel in the Desert	1984	Columbia	Besinque		
Guerilla	1994	AH	Schlaffer			Russian Campaign, The	1977	AH	Edwards		
Guilford	2002	GMT	Miklos			Russian Campaign, The - 4th Edition	2003	L2	Edwards		
Gulf Strike	1983	VG	Herman			Russian Front	1985	AH	Zimmerer		
Gung Hol - ASL Module 9	1992	AH	Greenwood			Samurai	1979	AH	Campagna		
Guns of August	1976	AH	Beyma			Saratoga	1998	GMT	Miklos		
Hammer of the Scots	2002	Columbia	Taylor			Shifting Sands	2006	MMP	Rinella		
Hannibal: Rome vs. Carthage	1996	AH	Simonitch			Siege	1983	Eurogames	Paull		
Harpoon	1981	GDW	Bond			Siege of Jerusalem, The	1989	AH	Sinigaglio	Schachter	Weiss
Hedgerow Hell - ASL Deluxe Module 2	1987	AH				Silent War	2005	Compass	Miller		
Hell's Highway	1983	VG	Butterfield			Sixth Fleet	1985	VG	Balkoski		
Here Come the Rebels	1993	AH	Balkoski			Sniper!	1973	SPI	Dunnigan		
Here I Stand	2006	GMT	Beach			Soldier Kings	2002	Avalanche	Markham		
Hitler's War	1981	AH	Gross			Solitaire ASL	1995	AH	Kibler		
Hollow Legions - ASL Module 7	1989	AH				SPQR	1992	GMT	Berg	Herman	
Hornet Leader	1991	GMT	Verssen			Squad Leader	1977	AH	Hill		
House Divided, A	1981	GDW	Chadwick			Stalingrad	1963	AH	Shaw	Schutz	
Hunt for Red October, The	1988	TSR	Niles			Stalingrad Pocket - 2nd Edition	1996	Gamers	Essig		
Imperium Romanum II	1985	West End	Nof			Stonewall in the Valley	1995	AH	Balkoski		
Ironclads	1979	Yaquinto	Fuseler			Stonewall Jackson's Way	1992	AH	Balkoski		
Joan of Arc	1998	COA	Bernard			Stonewall's Last Battle	1996	AH	Beach		
John Prados' Third Reich	2001	Avalanche	Knipple			Storm Over Arnhem	1981	AH	Allen		
Jutland	1967	AH	Dunnigan			Streets of Fire - ASL Deluxe Module 1	1985	AH			
Kampfgruppe Peiper I - ASL Historical Module 2	1993	AH	Leonard			Submarine	1976	AH	Peek		
Korean War, The	1986	VG	Balkoski			Successors	1997	AH	Berg	Simonitch	
Last Hurrah, The - ASL Module 6	1988	AH				Sword of Rome, The: Conquest of Italy, 362-272 BC	2004	GMT	Ferrell		
Liberty	2003	Columbia	Dalgiesh	Kwasny		Tac Air	1987	AH	Taylor	Morgan	
Lightning: Midway	2004	DG	Verssen			Tactics II	1958	AH	Roberts,CS		
Line in the Sand, A: The Battle of Iraq	1991	TSR	Niles			Target Arnhem: Across 6 Bridges	2005	MMP	Nakamura		
Lock 'N Load: Band of Heroes	2005	Matrix	Walker			Terrible Swift Sword	1976	SPI	Berg		
Lock 'N Load: Forgotten Heroes Vietnam	2003	Shrapnel	Walker			Third World War, The	1984	GDW	Chadwick		
London's Burning	1995	AH	Knight			Thirty Years War: Europe in Agony, 1618-1648	2001	GMT	Welker	Fox	
Longest Day, the	1980	AH	Reed			This Accursed Civil War	2002	GMT	Hull		
Luftwaffe	1971	AH	Zocchi			Thunder at Cassino	1987	AH	Allen		
Machiavelli	1977	AH	Taylor	Wood		Thunderbolt/Apache Leader	1991	GMT	Verssen		
MBT	1989	AH	Day			Tide of Iron	2007	FFG	multi		
Medieval	2003	GMT	Berg			Tobruk: Tank Battles in North Africa, 1942	1975	AH	Hock		
Memor '44 (base, Air, East, Pac, Ter, Wint)	2004	DOW	Borg			Tokyo Express	1988	VG	Southard		
Men of Iron - Volume I - The Rebirth of Infantry	2005	GMT	Berg			Totaler Krieg!	1999	DG	Emrich	Kosakowski	
Midway	1964	AH	Schutz			Triumph of Chaos	2005	COA	Dockter		
Mighty Endeavor, The	2005	MMP	Newhouse	Armstrong		Tunisia	1995	Gamers	Essig		
Modern Naval Battles	1989	3W	Emrich	Verssen		Turning Point: Stalingrad	1989	AH	Greenwood		
Monty's Gamble: Market Garden	2003	MMP	Rinella			Twilight Struggle	2005	GMT	Gupta	Matthews	
Mosby's Raiders	1985	VG	Smith			Up Front	1983	AH	Allen		
Mustangs	1991	AH	Taylor			Victory in the Pacific	1977	AH	Hamblen		
Napoleon	1974	AH	Dalgiesh	Gutteridge	Gibson	Victory: The Blocks of War	1998	Columbia	Dalgiesh		
Napoleon at Waterloo	1971	SPI	Dunnigan			Vietnam 1965-1975	1984	VG	Karp		
Napoleon in Europe	2001	Eagle	Drover			Von Manstein's Backhand Blow	2002	GMT	Blennemann		
Napoleonic Wars, the	2002	GMT	McLaughlin	Greenwood	Knight	Wallenstein	2002	Queen	Henn		
Napoleon's Last Battles	1976	SPI	Zucker			War and Peace	1980	AH	McLaughlin		
Napoleon's Triumph	2007	Simmons	Simmons			War At Sea	1975	AH	Edwards		
NATO: The Next War in Europe	1983	VG	Maxell	Trup		War of 1812	1973	Columbia	Dalgiesh	Gutteridge	
Naval Battles	2004	Mayfair	Verssen			Waterloo	2002	Phalanx	Berg		
Naval War	1979	AH	Taylor	Zimmerer		Waterloo	1962	AH	Shaw		
Nero	2002	Phalanx	Berg			We the People	1994	AH	Herman		
Onward, Christian Soldiers	2006	GMT	Berg			Wellington	2005	GMT	McLaughlin		
Pacific Typhoon	2008	Knight	Coussis			Wellington's Victory - Battle of Waterloo	1976	SPI	Davis		
Pacific Victory	2000	Columbia	Dalgiesh			West of Alamein - ASL Module 5	1988	AH	McNamara		
Pacific War	1985	VG	Herman			WestFront	1992	Columbia	Besinque		
Panzer Armees Afrika	1973	SPI	Dunnigan			Whistling Death	2003	COA	Webster		
Panzer Grenadier	1998	Avalanche	Bennighof			Wilderness War	2001	GMT	Ruhnke		
Panzer Grenadier, Eastern Front	2005	Avalanche	Bennighof	Knipple		Wings of War (FA, BD, Min, Rec, Dawn)	2004	FFG	Angiolino	Paglia	
Panzer Leader	1974	AH	Reed			Wooden Ships & Iron Men	1975	AH	Taylor		
PanzerBlitz	1970	AH	Dunnigan			World at War: Eisenbach Gap	2007	LNL	Walker		
Panzergruppe Guderian	1976	SPI	Dunnigan			World in Flames	1985	ADG	Rowland		
Paratrooper - ASL Module 2	1986	AH	Greenwood			World War I	1975	SPI	Dunnigan		
Partisan - ASL Module 4	1987	AH				World War II: Barbarossa to Berlin	2002	GMT	Raicer		
Paths of Glory	1999	GMT	Raicer			Yanks - ASL Module 3	1987	AH	Martin	Kibler	
Patton's Best	1987	AH	Shelley			Zero!	2001	GMT	Verssen		