

Happy Anniversary!

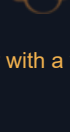


Happy 12th Anniversary of Pirates of the Burning Sea!

Welcome to the Second PotBS newsletter from Vision Online Games. It's hard to believe that twelve years have come and gone since this amazing game was introduced. Let's all hoist a cheer and wish for another dozen to come!

The past twelve years of the Burning Sea would not have been possible without you -- the loyal and supportive Captains who kept this game alive. Some of you have been here since Beta, before the game even launched, on through to today.

There are a lot of great things happening in the game right now, and many more to come! If you have not played Pirates of the Burning Sea in a while, you can download the Game here: <https://play.burningsea.com>



It is only appropriate to start this 12th Anniversary Newsletter with a word from the man who started it all, the CEO and Co-Founder of Flying Lab Software, **Russell Williams!**

Ahoy there!

It has been quite a while since we started our voyage into the world of the Burning Sea. It was in 2002 that we started talking about a cartoony MMO pirate game in the vein of Monkey Island, a favorite among all of us. We started with five people and were determined to keep things as small as possible. That really helped in the first two years as we built, rebuilt, and built again.



I think other than the fact that the original idea was a cartoony adventure game, there are very few secrets that I could reveal about the development. We were extremely open and communicative on the company forums, and of all the good things about Pirates, I think having those wide-ranging design discussions with the community was my favorite part. It was like a great book I could not put down. Every time I finished some work and wanted to take a break, I would dive into the forums and chat away.

We had an amazing community and I am still thankful for all the people that I met, both on the forums and at trade events and parties. I remember passing through England on our way to a convention in Germany, when we announced that we would be at a restaurant if any community people wanted to show up. We filled up the venue and then some, and spent the night talking about great ideas and our hopes for the game.

Our community also showed their passion in the construction of our ships. We had planned on something like 12 ships at launch, and hoped to get to 18, but with our community, I believe we had dozens by the time we released. And they were gorgeous! Watching people come together to help each other build something they had never done before was inspiring.

Of course, by the time we shipped, World of Warcraft had come out and it would be quite some time before any other MMO was able to get a solid foothold after release. But I am still incredibly proud of what we built. We really pushed the edge of the interaction of economy and combat, and an environment that would simultaneously support PvP and non-PvP in the same world space. And there is still no tall ship combat that compares to what we built.

The team at Flying Lab was one of the best groups of people I have ever had the pleasure of working with. Many of them have gone on to achieve amazing things and are building the next generation of games and technology. Someone once asked me "Would you rather work on an amazing project with a bad team, or a boring project with a great team?" For me, the great team would win out every time, though at Flying Lab I got to work on amazing projects with great people.

Which brings me to the future of Pirates. I am thrilled to say after 12 years the ship is still sailing, all due to the passion of people like Fodderboy and Vision Entertainment. Vision and we go way, way back, to just before we started on Pirates when I met Darrell at E3. Darrell is a New Yorker in the best sense, a straightforward, hard working guy who is filled with endless energy and enthusiasm. He is someone that is all too rare in the games industry, and I am delighted that he is guiding Pirates and confident you have got the right people in command of the ship. I remember hoping we would get to ten years. Now I am thinking twenty!

-- Russell Williams



Happy 12 Year Anniversary!

Anniversary Content is Now Live!

Anniversary Content will run from **January 22 to February 24**



You will find the anniversary in-game content on the docks in your nation's starting port.



Ongoing Upgrades and Fixes!

In our last update, we mentioned that User-Generated Flag and Sail Content was Live Again. In one of Vision's first fixes, the long-absent user-generated Flag and Sail content once again returned to grace the Burning Sea! The ability to submit NEW custom flags and sails, as well as returning the Flag and Sail Store to full operation is pending completion of a few other tasks, but both features are planned to be brought live as soon as possible.

As previous updates have mentioned, the first tasks Vision set itself when shouldering the responsibility for PotBS was modernizing the code and resolving a number of internal issues that had been causing problems for years. This included a large number of significant jobs, including upgrading the code base to Visual Studio 2019, setting up multiple performance-monitoring and -enhancing servers, resurrecting the Dev Environment and Build System, working to obtain newer versions of proprietary Sony Localization tools, The Miles Sound System, PathEngine, Alchemy Engine and much, much more.

We are proud to announce that on this 12th Anniversary, the first Vision-derived Server-side Build of our Game (updated to VS2019) is being put through its paces on the Test Server. This is why the Test Server cannot currently be "seen" in the server list -- it is running a different version of the Game! Good news... thus far, only 3 bugs have been reported. We are looking forward to being able to bring this new, more stable version to the Live Servers soon.

Also, now that the Internal Development Environment has been restored, work on Game Content is beginning. More news will be coming on that very soon!

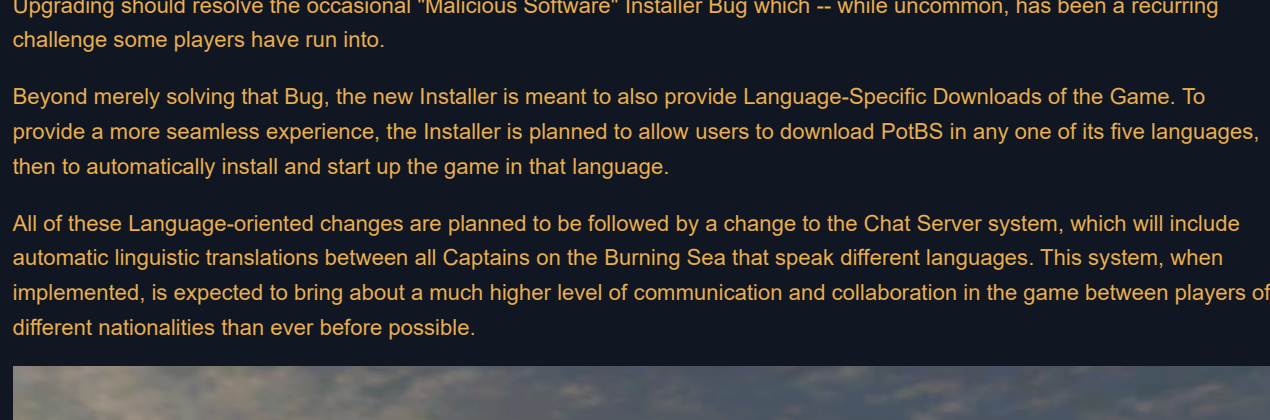
Vision's Discord Server is equipped with a 5-Language automatic Language Translation System; the same five languages supported by the game itself. Today the Discord Server provides a much-needed direct connection to the Development Team and Support Staff at Vision, as well as a place for Societies to recruit, new Captains to ask about various Missions and a venue to share Screenshots and Videos of epic moments.

If you haven't joined yet, go on over and take a look! <https://discord.gg/burning-sea>

Once the new Server build is fully tested, efforts will turn to implementing a new launcher and patch system to distribute an updated Game Client. This will either be the newest version of the BitRaider launcher or a different launcher/patcher entirely. Upgrading should resolve the occasional "Malicious Software" Installer Bug which -- while uncommon, has been a recurring challenge some players have run into.

Beyond merely solving that Bug, the new Installer is meant to also provide Language-Specific Downloads of the Game. To provide a more seamless experience, the Installer is planned to allow users to download PotBS in any one of its five languages, then to automatically install and start up the game in that language.

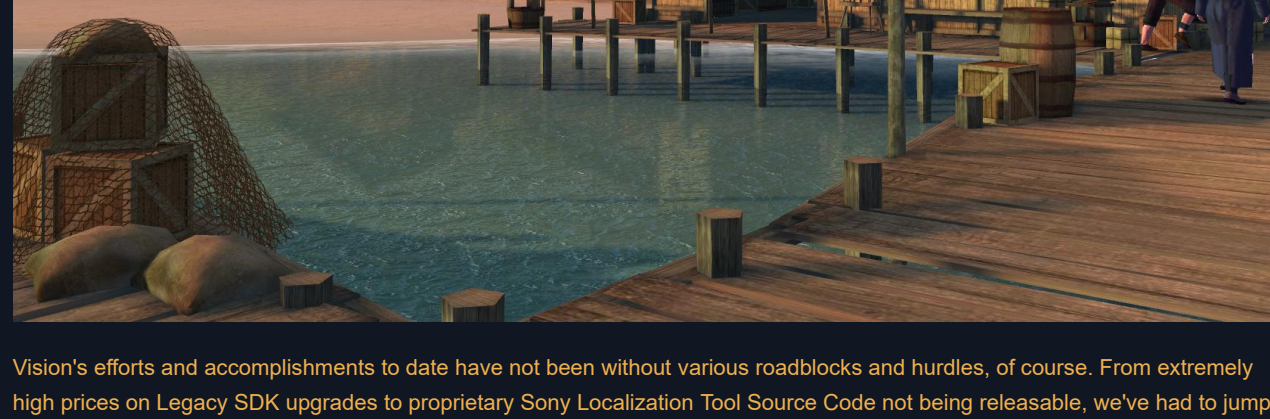
All of these linguistic-oriented changes are planned to be handled by a change to the Chat Server system, which will include automating linguistic translations between all Captains on the Burning Sea that speak different languages. This system, when implemented, is expected to bring about a much higher level of communication and collaboration in the game between players of different nationalities than ever before possible.



Vision's efforts and accomplishments to date have not been without various roadblocks and hurdles, of course. From extremely high prices on Legacy SDK upgrades to proprietary Sony Localization Tool Source Code not being releasable, we have had to jump through any number of hoops to make things work, including craftinging custom code to implement Localization and support new content in the game.

But once all of the above is done, the list of tasks which lead to implementing the Legacy Server will rapidly heave into sight. For those unfamiliar with it, the Legacy Server will be an older version of PotBS, dating back to near the split from Sony. It will use older rules, captains and will be a whole new world, with everyone starting out from scratch. It will be initially opened to those Captains who elect to participate in it at the Beta Testing Stage, but then will be open to anyone who wishes to join. Those Captains who choose to be Beta Testers will have a slight advantage in exchange for putting up with any issues and helping to report bugs -- they will start out a little earlier, giving them a chance to establish a foothold in the new world before the rest of the players pile in.

Once the Legacy Server has been implemented, Vision plans to finish resurrecting the Art Toolset and Asset Pipeline, dramatically improve all of the In-Game Tutorials for New Players, update the Shaders and Graphics Drivers in the Game to more modern versions, correct UI Scaling Issues / Text overflow bugs and other Graphic issues, add multiple Costume Slots for storing and instantly swapping outfits, restore Dynamic Weather, Reputation-based NPC Aggression and much, much more.

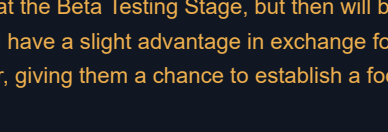


Some of these advances depend on if we are able to successfully negotiate to get code for Legacy or no-longer-used Tools and Engines, such as Alchemy. Others, if we can somehow agree upon a reasonable price for new code from old, entrenched SDK operators. But we will make sure to keep everyone abreast of our progress, both via Announcements on the Discord Server as well as in these Newsletters.

Also, this Newsletter is shifting to a Quarterly (3-Month) Schedule to ensure there will be lots of progress to report.

Thanks for reading -- more news to come, next quarter!

~ The Pirates of the Burning Sea Team



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