The Myst Graph, 1: The 1993 Game as a Graph

1,355 cards, their links, and how to read them

Guillaume Lethuillier
glthr.com

March 29, 2025 · updated November 14, 2026

Series: The Myst Graph — Part 1 of 3
Next: The Myst Graph, 2: Unreachable Views and Disabled Links (glthr.com/myst-graph-2)
Interactive browser: glthr.com/myst-graph
All 5 Myst games: glthr.com/myst-graphs (Myst, Riven, Exile, Revelation, End of Ages)

Abstract

I represent the original Macintosh Myst (1993) as a directed graph: its six Age stacks contain 1,355 cards, represented with stack and virtual nodes in a graph of 1,364 nodes and 3,245 edges. This first article explains how to read its nodes, edges and browser view. The graph omits gameplay constraints and some image substitutions, so a path through it need not be a feasible route through the game.

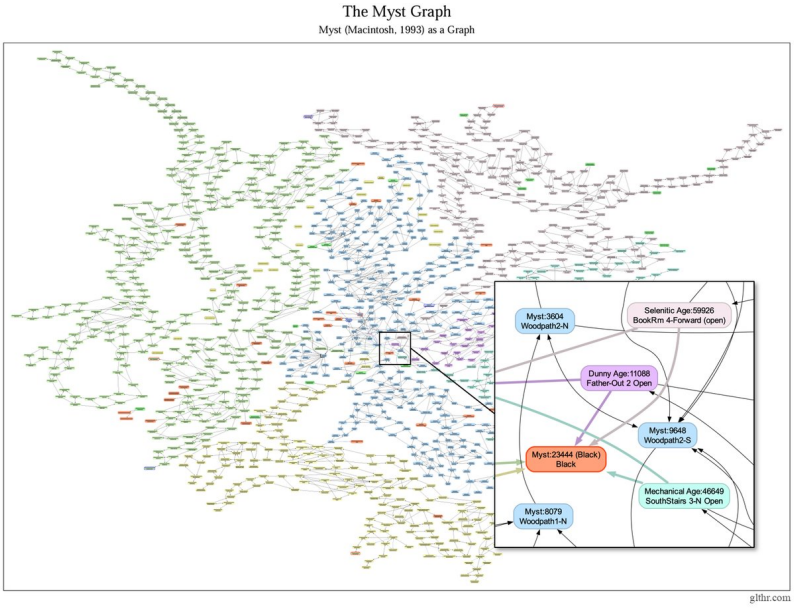
> **Revised (November 2026):** I revised this article after agents re-examined my Myst Graph and DeMystify against the original game files, and the corrections are listed on the series page.

Upon reflection, **Myst** has long been more analogous to a graph than a traditional linear game, owing to the relative freedom it affords players. This is particularly evident in its first release (Macintosh, 1993), which was composed of interconnected HyperCard cards.

It is now literally one. Here is Myst as a graph:

Version of the game: Myst, original Macintosh CD-ROM release (1993). The card IDs are those of its six HyperCard stacks, all dated July 1993.

Cite as: Guillaume Lethuillier, "The Myst Graph, 1: The 1993 Game as a Graph", glthr.com, March 29, 2025. https://glthr.com/myst-graph-1



The Myst Graph, a comprehensive representation of the game's structure that maps the connections between various views and locations, **is downloadable as a poster-size PDF**. It can also be **explored in the browser**, where any card can be found by its number or its name.

Introduction

Origins of the Myst Graph

I fondly recall creating, just like many others (including more skilled cartographers), a rudimentary *topological map* of the infamous Myst Mazerunner puzzle when I was young. The idea recently struck me: could this approach be extended to the entire game? The HyperCard implementation's deterministic connection of cards seemed tailor-made for an even more abstract map: a *graph*. After all, graphs are a powerful tool for information analysis. By having the ability to represent the original Myst as a network of interconnected nodes and edges, I could gain a deeper understanding of how the different aspects of the game are related and uncover new insights into its underlying mechanics.

However, I did not see myself creating it manually; it would have been a monumental and error-prone task. Fortunately, I soon discovered, thanks to the efforts of Uli Kusterer (YouTube channel: "Masters of the Void") and the "Reverse Engineering Myst" presentation at Mysterium Con 2024, that the game's source code was accessible. That changed everything: how about generating the graph programmatically?

Roadmap

(1) In this article, I introduce the concept of the Myst Graph, explaining why it is an important tool for analyzing the game, and walk readers through how to interpret the graph, highlighting key concepts and insights. *(2)* A second article explores new findings that have emerged from analyzing the Myst Graph. This article builds on the present article, providing additional context and explanations for the insights gained

from the graph. *(3)* A third article details the technical approach and introduces the open-source program "DeMystify," the program I created to generate the graph. This provides readers with hands-on experience exploring the Myst Graph using code.

Minor Terminology Clarifications

Before diving into the presentation of the graph, let's clarify some words. "*Dunny*" refers to D'ni: this is how the D'ni stack was initially named. Also, I may refer to the Myst Age as the "*Myst Island*" for variation. When discussing graph theory, I will use the following terms: *nodes* will refer to the vertices, while *edges* represent the connections between them. For those unfamiliar with graph theory, just remember that nodes are boxes (each a view, or card) and edges are arrows pointing from one box to another, illustrating a relationship between the two.

Disclaimer

This project is a personal initiative to analyze and understand the classic Myst game. It is an unofficial, non-commercial open-source effort created for educational purposes only. This project is not affiliated with Cyan Worlds, Inc. or the original creators of Myst. Any opinions, insights, or analyses presented on this blog are my personal views and do not reflect any official positions or statements of Cyan Worlds, Inc., its affiliates, or any organizations I might be affiliated with.

Before analyzing this graph, please be aware that this series of articles will contain spoilers for the game. If you are new to Myst or plan to play it soon, I recommend skipping these articles and experiencing it firsthand: Myst remains such a fantastic game!

Basic Properties of the Myst Graph

Card labels such as Myst:70105 have a thick underline, in the color of their Age, and open that card in the graph browser.

Nodes and Edges

The game's world comprises 6 HyperCard stacks, one for each Age, totaling 1,355 cards (the disc also holds a launcher stack and resource stacks, which the graph leaves out). The graph abstracts these into 1,364 nodes connected by 3,245 edges.

The six stacks contain the following cards:

Stack	Internal name	Shipped cards
Myst Island	`Myst`	330
Selenitic Age	`Selenitic Age`	223
Mechanical Age	`Mechanical Age`	213
Channelwood Age	`Channelwood Age`	376
Stoneship Age	`Stoneship Age`	183
Dunny Age	`Dunny Age`	30
Total		**1,355**

(Update November 2026) The DeMystify updates changed the reported edge count from 3,189 to 3,245. The latest adds the two links of Myst:23279, found through `go next` and `go first`, and no longer counts one link, now drawn as shadowed.

The number of nodes does not coincide with the number of cards and stacks because 3 nodes are *virtual*. They represent cards that were not shipped in the release. They only exist because they are referred to by actual cards. These virtual nodes are Mechanical Age 17673 and 20348, and Selenitic Age 31832.

In this version of the graph, edges do not encode gameplay constraints. A card is considered connected to another if it references that card; the specifics of how the player interacts with the card to reach the other card—whether by simply clicking or solving a complex puzzle—are left implicit. (This choice is discussed later.)

Paths

Paths are sequences of edges from node A to node B. Because the gameplay has not been integrated into the graph, they do not necessarily represent feasible direct paths in the game. For instance, a puzzle on the path may require performing actions outside the path. In other words, the paths evoked in these articles abstract away all the constraints of the game, except for the connections between cards.

Theoretically, the *shortest path* between the starting point and the (good) ending consists of 24 edges. From a pure graph distance point of view, going from the beginning of the game to its ending takes only 24 movements or changes of direction. The *most distant nodes* (in other words, the longest shortest path in the graph) are separated by 130 edges. Disabled and backtracking edges, automatic next steps and Zip navigation are excluded from these distances. In the context of the game, these paths are detailed in the second article.

Clusters

Interestingly, while the file that encodes the graph does not contain any information about clusters (except for isolated clusters, as explained in the second article, and for the colors of the nodes, for rendering purposes), the rendering engine that transforms it into a PDF creates an organic (albeit imperfect) formation of clusters: the Myst Island in the middle, and the Ages at the periphery. This is explainable: Myst Island refers to all Ages; each Age only refers to Myst Island.

Apart from a few isolated nodes, there is one disconnected cluster that, consequently, cannot be reached from within the game. This isolated cluster comprises 3 nodes, including 2 virtual ones, from the Mechanical Age: originally, 17552 had directed edges with 20348 and 17673, both absent from the Mechanical Age stack.

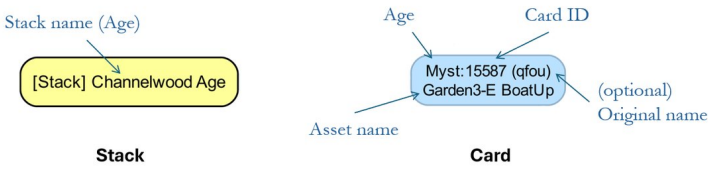
Legend: How to Read the Graph

Nodes

Colors

Each Age has its own color to facilitate the identification of stack-based clusters.

Node Labels



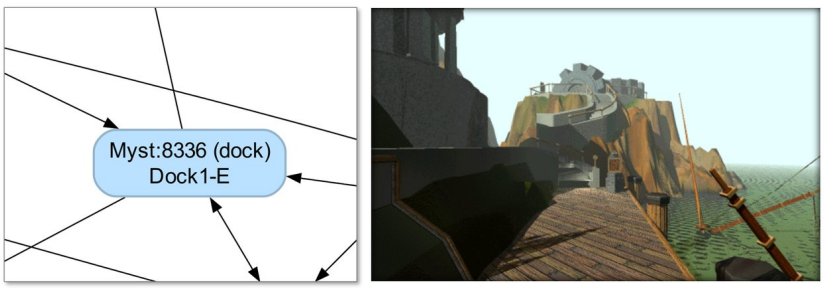
When a node abstracts a stack, the name of the stack (corresponding to the Age) is prefixed with "[Stack]". For instance, "[Stack] Myst" is the stack containing the cards belonging to the Myst Island.

Nodes representing cards are labeled following this pattern: "{Stack}:{ID} [({Original name})] \ {Image name}".

The cards are identified by an ID (see page 280 of this reference), a HyperCard-generated integer. Example: "Mechanical Age:12345" refers to card ID 12345 belonging to the Mechanical Age stack. These IDs are unique *per stack*. Since each stack has its own set of unique IDs, there can be collisions across stacks where two or more IDs are identical between different stacks. This is evident in the Myst Graph, where some IDs appear twice across Ages (8059, 8794, 9075, 18304, 19870, 21064, 32302, 33578, 34421, 39710, 52457, 55809, and 74269). As HyperCard automatically increments these IDs within each stack, ID order may suggest relative creation order. However, this relationship may not hold for the underlying assets, as they were rendered separately through a different process. In other words, a "recent" (relative to the release) card does not necessarily mean that the asset it represents was also rendered close to the release.

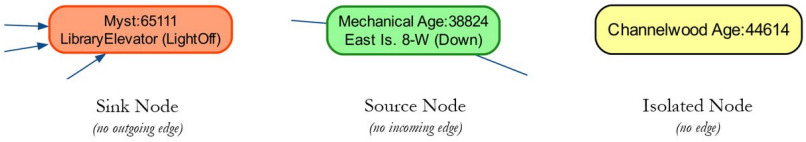
Some cards were deliberately named. When that occurs, the original name is specified between parentheses after the ID. For example, "Myst:81655 (AchenarLose)" was named "AchenarLose" by the Myst creators.

Last, cards represent a view or an image, so they need a reference to an asset filename. This information is displayed just below the label. So "Myst:8336 (dock) \ *Dock1-E*" means that card ID 8336, belonging to the Myst Island and named initially "dock", features an image called "*Dock1-E*". This specific node plays an important role in the game, as it is where the player starts.

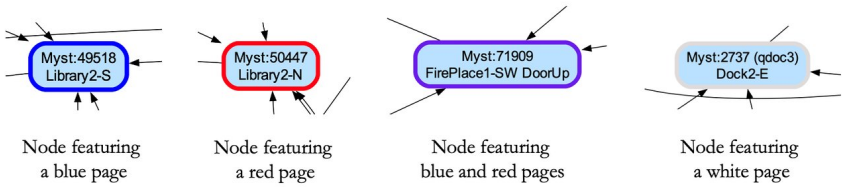


Myst:8336 (dock), featuring image "Dock1-E", is the game's starting point.
It corresponds to card ID 8336 belonging to stack "Myst."

Special Nodes



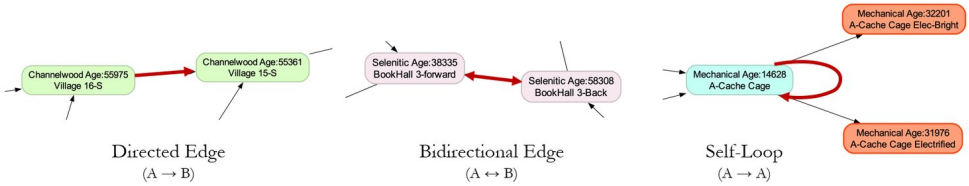
Sink nodes serve as destinations, receiving connections but not providing any exit paths. **Source nodes** act as starting points, sending out connections and initiating new paths without incoming edges. **Isolated nodes** are unreachable from the rest of the graph, having no incoming or outgoing edges that could be followed. These labels alone do not establish gameplay access or asset visibility.



More specific to the game, nodes with **blue borders** represent views containing blue pages, while those with **red borders** show views having red pages. The only **purple-bordered** node denotes a view encompassing blue and red pages, and the **white-bordered node** represents the white page.

Edges

Directions

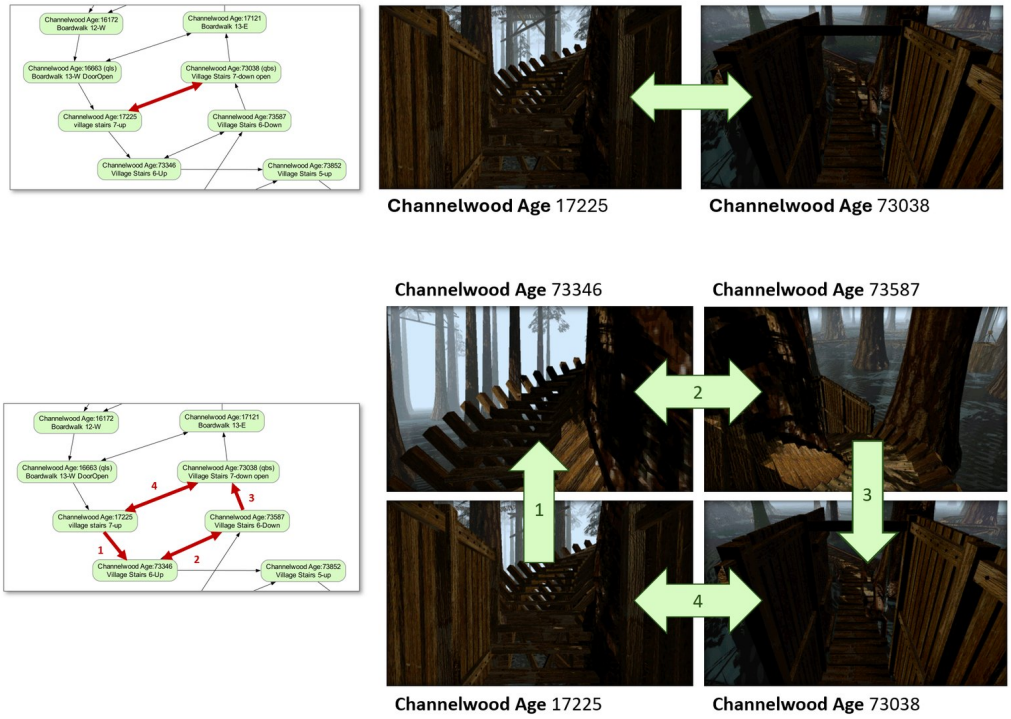


The Myst Graph is a directed graph. Almost all the edges are either **directed** (they connect two nodes in one direction) or **bidirectional** (they connect two nodes in both directions). Rarely (9 occurrences, plus 15 disabled ones), some edges are **self-loops**, connecting a node to itself.

(Update November 2026) I previously wrote 11 disabled self-loops; the graph has 15.

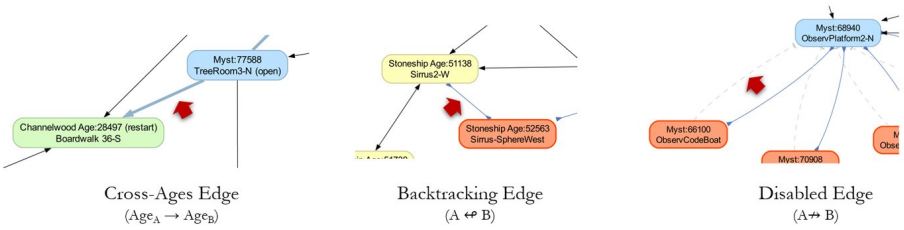
In the game, a *bidirectional* edge typically represents a direct change of orientation (cardinal points, looking up and down). Movements are usually represented by *directed* edges, as walking backward is impossible, with some exceptions (backtracking edges; see below).

Here is a concrete demonstration. In the village of the Channelwood Age, changing between one of the staircase ascending views (17225) and its corresponding pathway view (73038) can be done in a single click as the edge is bidirectional. However, once the player takes the stairs to go up (73346), it is impossible to backtrack directly to the original staircase ascending view without first turning around to look down (73587), then reaching the original pathway view (73038) and last turning around again (17225).



To summarize, and with some exceptions, from a navigational perspective, while directed edges can be interpreted as walking, bidirectional edges can be interpreted as changing directions.

Special Edges



Edges connecting two nodes from different Ages (**cross-Ages edges**) are rendered with a thick line. Edges that connect exclusively two nodes are **backtracking edges**. They act as a device to zoom in/zoom out (one click to enter the next node, one click to go back to the previous node) and are represented by edges with inverted arrow heads and tails. Last, some of the connections are commented out in the source code of Myst: they characterize **disabled edges**, represented by dashed lines with a tee arrow shape. A connection can also be written in the scripts and yet out of reach: the button that holds it lies entirely under another button, which receives every click. It is a **shadowed edge**, represented by a dotted gray line with a gray arrowhead. Like disabled edges, shadowed edges are not counted among the edges of the graph and are not followed when distances are computed.

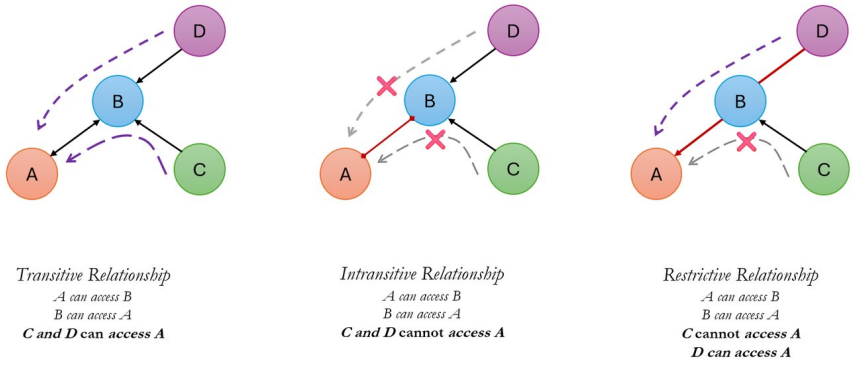
(Update November 2026) I added this kind of edge after publication. The graph has one, from Myst:89742 to Myst:88832.

The graph also shows **automatic next steps**. When a script shows one view and then moves on to another within the same click, the step out of the intermediate

view is drawn with a hollow arrowhead. Where an ordinary edge joins the same two nodes in the same direction, both share one line, and the hollow arrowhead follows the filled one. These steps are not followed when distances are computed.

Transitivity

In Myst, there are three forms of transitivity.

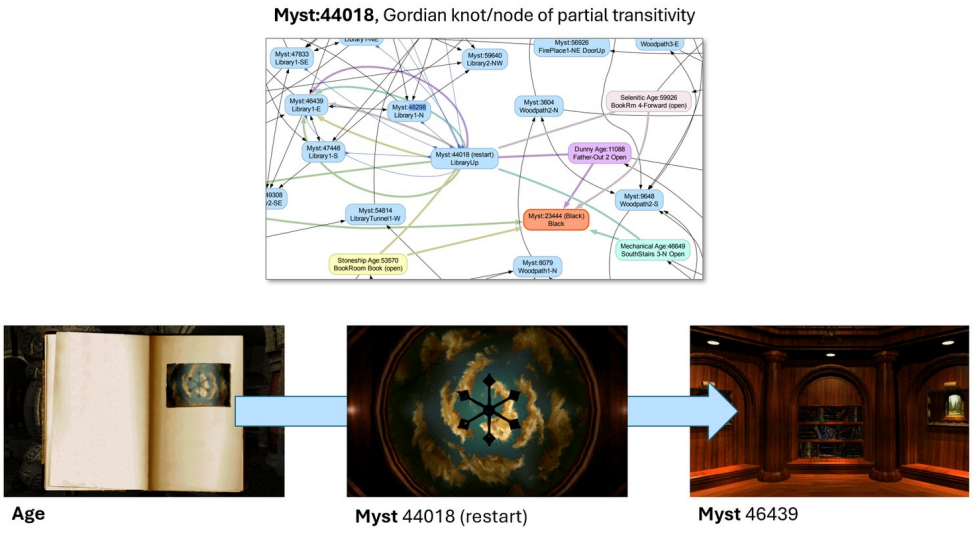


(Update November 2026) I use "intransitive" and "partially transitive" informally here. They describe navigation whose destination depends on the card saved by HyperTalk's push/pop mechanism.

First, by default, intermediary nodes are **fully transitive** (edge directions notwithstanding, obviously). If node B can access A, and C and D can access B, then C and D can access A. This is the common navigational mechanism.

Second, some edges are **intransitive**: while B can access A and, reciprocally, A can access B, C and D can access B too, but they cannot access A. This relationship characterizes the backtracking edges.

Last, some edges are **partially transitive**: if node B can access A, and C and D can access B, only D can access A. In the realm of Myst, this is only true of the edges making the player return to Myst after completing an Age. Upon returning to Myst Island with the book, they always first see the ceiling of the library (Myst:44018). When they click the ceiling, they automatically face the bookshelf (Myst:46439). (The mechanism by which this is done with HyperTalk, the scripting language of HyperCard, is detailed in the third article.)



Limitations

First, as explained in "Nodes and Edges", the graph does not capture the gameplay mechanics. Although this approach has its limitations, it provides a significant advantage. By separating the gameplay from the graph structure, I can already gain novel insights into Myst without dealing with the complexities of puzzle design. Of course, nothing prevents future versions of the graph from including this logic.

Second, the rendered clusters are not entirely separate from each other. They overlap at their boundaries. For example, Myst:38896 and Myst:30143 encroach on the Dunny Age. While it would be possible to constrain the graph so there is no overlapping, I kept the rendering engine as Age-agnostic as possible. "DeMystify", the graph generator, is open source and now also writes a browser view of the graph, with zoom, search and filters by Age; readers can try different arrangements, and I would be very interested in seeing their results.

Third, the graph only captures straightforward relationships between cards and stacks. Analyzing the scripts more granularly and identifying complex relationships, such as image substitutions, would be interesting. This lack of granularity is evident for the books from the bookshelf: the graph still does not capture the navigation from page to page inside a book, which the game handles by image substitution.

Conclusion

Myst was already a graph in the way it was built: cards, and links between cards. Drawing it makes that structure visible, from the clusters of the Ages to the limits of what the graph can say about the gameplay. The second article shows what this new conceptual tool reveals: hidden connections and relationships between game elements that were previously unseen.

The graph will become one with the game.

Series and Companion Articles

The Myst Graph (glthr.com/page/myst-graph)

#	Article	Address
1	**The Myst Graph, 1: The 1993 Game as a Graph** (this article)	glthr.com/myst-graph-1
2	The Myst Graph, 2: Unreachable Views and Disabled Links	glthr.com/myst-graph-2
3	The Myst Graph, 3: Creating the Graph Using DeMystify	glthr.com/myst-graph-3

The 5 Myst Studies on glthr.com (glthr.com/myst-graphs)

Game	Graph Study & Browser	Findings
Myst (1993)	The Myst Graph (3) · Browser	The Library Ceiling Shortcut, Behind the Ages, Trapped in Myst
Riven (1997)	The Riven Graph (2) · Browser	The Riven Diffs, The Contradictions of the Fifth Age, Catherine Is Still in Her Cell, The Sixth Knock, What Changed Between Riven's CDs and DVD
Myst III: Exile (2001)	The Exile Graph (2) · Browser	Linking Without a Book, The Valve That Refuses to Turn, The Two Realities of the Edanna Tusk
Myst IV: Revelation (2004)	The Revelation Graph (2) · Browser	The Vision the Amulet Never Showed, 53,921 Files: Watching Ubisoft Montreal Build Myst IV
Myst V: End of Ages (2005)	The End of Ages Graph (2) · Browser	Commands Beyond the Slate, Inside Myst V's 2005 Neural Network, Ghosts of Uru

How to cite this article

> Guillaume Lethuillier, "The Myst Graph, 1: The 1993 Game as a Graph", glthr.com, March 29, 2025.
> https://glthr.com/myst-graph-1

For BibTeX:

```
@misc{lethuillier2025myst,
  author = {Lethuillier, Guillaume},
  title  = {The Myst Graph, 1: The 1993 Game as a Graph},
  year   = {2025},
  month  = mar,
  url    = {https://glthr.com/myst-graph-1},
  note   = {glthr.com}
}
```

Your questions and leads are welcome: myst@glthr.com

This document was typeset with LaTeX from the article published at https://glthr.com/myst-graph-1, which remains the reference version (as updated on November 14, 2026).