

Book Writing

SLQ Wiki Fabrication Lab 2026/01/12 11:20

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To get started, please become a State Library [patron](#). We will be drawing inspiration from [The Well](#)

A couple of explanations of process

****Posted by Neel Krishnaswami on November 20, 2003 at 08:43 PM****

Here's a little roleplaying game that I've been toying with. I call it the Lexicon rpg, in honor of its inspiration, Milorad Pavic's Dictionary of the Khazars.

The basic idea is that each player takes on the role of a scholar, from before scholarly pursuits became professionalized (or possibly after they ceased to be). You are cranky, opinionated, prejudiced and eccentric. You are also collaborating with a number of your peers – the other players – on the construction of an encyclopedia describing some historical period (possibly of a fantastic world).

The game is played in 26 turns, one for each letter of the alphabet. **Actually in this instance we it'll be twenty-three turns as as we're going to skip Q, X and Z as options letter options**

1. On the first turn, each player writes an entry for the letter 'A'. You come up with the name of the entry, and you write 100-200 words on the subject. At the end of the article, you sign your name, and make two citations to other entries in the encyclopedia. These citations will be phantoms – their names exist, but their content will get filled in only on the appropriate turn. No letter can have more entries than the number of players, either, so all citations made on the first turn have to start with non-A letters. **Essentially, you citations in the first turn start with the letter B through Y, excluding the letters Q, X and Z**

2. On the second and subsequent turns, you continue to write entries for B, C, D and so on. However, you need to make three citations. One must be a reference to an already-written entry, and two must be to unwritten entries. (On the 25th and 26th turns, you only need to cite one and zero phantom entries, respectively, because there won't be enough phantom entries, otherwise.)

It's an academic sin to cite yourself, you can never cite an entry you've written. (OOC, this forces the players to intertwine their entries, so that everybody depends on everyone else's facts.)
Incidentally, once you run out of empty slots, obviously you can only cite the phantom slots.

3. Despite the fact that your peers are self-important, narrow-minded dunderheads, they are honest scholars. No matter how strained their interpretations are, their facts are accurate as historical research can make them. So if you cite an entry, you have to treat its factual content as true! (Though you can argue vociferously with the interpretation and introduce new facts that shade the interpretation.)

4. This little game will probably play best on a wiki, and it should take a month or so to play to completion. At the end of it, you'll have a highly-hyperlinked document that details a nice little piece

of collaborative world-building.

The owner of the wiki should set the general subject of the Lexicon. I suggest that he or she make use of the technique of “open reference” when describing the historical period: “You are all revisionist scholars from the Paleotechnic Era arguing about how the Void Ghost Rebellion led to the overthrow of the cyber-gnostic theocracy and the establishment of the Third Republic.” What a cyber-gnostic theocracy is, or what happened to the first two republics, or what the Paleotechnic Era is are all unknown – they are named to specifically evoke a mood and inspire the other players’ creativity. (This is an idea which I’ve first seen in fully articulated form in the character creation rules for Robin Laws’s Hero Wars game.)

From the Wikipedia Entry (which is much clearer)

Lexicon is a computer-assisted role-playing game invented by Neel Krishnaswami and popularised by the indie role-playing game community. As originally proposed, it is played online using wiki software. Players assume the role of scholars who write the history and background of a particular fictitious time, setting, or incident.^[1] As the game goes on, the players collaboratively create an elaborately interwoven account.

Each game is a series of 26 turns, keyed to the letters of the alphabet from A to Z. On the first turn, each player must write an Encyclopedia-style entry beginning with the letter A, citing and linking to two entries that are not yet written. These are called “undefined” entries. Undefined entries must begin with a letter later in the alphabet.

The 25 subsequent turns proceed consecutively through the letters of the alphabet, one letter per turn. In a turn, each player writes one entry that begins with the turn’s specified letter. If one or more undefined entries are available that begin with the letter, a player must choose and write an undefined entry before any new entries can be created under that letter. A new entry must create and link to two undefined entries, and must also link to an entry written on a previous turn. Near the endgame, when sufficient undefined entries exist to occupy all players for the remainder of the game, no new undefined entries may be created.

Many variants exist, such as covering two or three letters per turn, or starting each player on a different letter. Some games permit other players to post comments or expansions of earlier entries. The optional “Rule of X” treats X (or any other appropriate letter) as a wild card; entries for the X turn may begin with any letter. “Telephone pad” is a shorter variant with 8 turns (corresponding to the letters on a telephone keypad) instead of 26 turns (one per letter of the alphabet).