@ISSUE

The Alexandria Library: a role-playing game library

by R. Talsorian Games

A role-playing game library. What a crazy idea! Yet, the *Alexandria Library* is here and growing. Some of you out there may have seen the library at a show. Some of may have even given a book or two to them. But just what is it?

Before we answer the question, let's first ask you to think back to the first time you discovered tabletop roleplaying. Was it last year, being roped into joining a *Witcher TRPG* one-shot adventure at a local convention? Was it when a friend excitedly handed you a bucket full of d6's as they described how exploding dice worked in *Star Wars*? Did you come across a dusty copy of *Fiend's Folio* in your family's bookshelf in the living room and find yourself intrigued by the monstrous artwork and stat blocks? Did you watch a stream on Twitch of a group of women telling app-driven stories while playing *Weave*, and needed to order a copy immediately? Did your older sibling lead you on a summer-long campaign where at the end the Stars finally were Right, and you came face to face with an Elder God? Did you spend hours and hours during Winter Break rolling up dozens of characters of every conceivable race and class, just in case that when school started up, if your friends needed that half-orc bard, or that protocol droid, or that Malkavian with a scar on her arm to round out the party, you would be ready?

Now wouldn't it be wonderful if, at a game convention, you could walk with your friends into a room containing stacks of RPG source books and modules, reference guides, gamemaster screens, shelf after shelf of game systems of all kinds, from the earliest editions of *D&D* to today's innovative indie games. And you could pull a book off the shelf and say *"This. This is where it started for me. This is why I love this hobby."*

And then, imagine if the Librarian on duty says *"Go ahead, flip through it. Take some time remembering it, or, better yet, why don't you play a game of it for your friends, right now? We have tables available. We even have someone who can be your gamemaster!"* And then you get to play. Maybe the system shows its age. Maybe you remember that one time when you tricked the city ombudsman into allowing your allies' small flotilla of ships into the harbor to retake the prison and free your unjustly held brother. And maybe you get to experience a game from 35 years ago that originated and planted the seeds for dozens of modern video games, movies, pop culture references, and experiences you simply take for granted now.

Imagine if there was a curated library, containing as many different RPG systems, as many artifacts as possible from pen-and-paper games from the four decades, waiting for you to explore.

This exists. This is the promise of the *Alexandria RPG Library*, a non-profit status entity dedicated to preserving the history of tabletop roleplaying games by collecting examples of the wide variety of gaming systems from that original *Dungeons & Dragons* white box to the newest indie and mainstream releases. But not only collect them, but to make sure they are available to be played.

Industry Talk

The Alexandria Library - *continued from previous page.*

About two years ago, the Library approached the head of gaming at *Emerald City Comic Con* about having a room dedicated to teaching the history of classic RPGs to convention-goers. They couldn't quite give the library a full room, but they were allowed to set up shelves, and were given space to run classic game sessions. It was a modest success, with convention attendees browsing the shelves, flipping through books, some sessions of *Rifts, D&D 2E* and more were played. From this start, the *Alexandria Library* petitioned for space at other Seattle-area conventions: *Evergreen Tabletop Expo, GenCon, PAX West, Orca Con,* again at *ECCC* the following year and more area shows. Each show giving a full room or play area, and the space being busy the whole event.

The Library lives off of donations of space from events and cons. That is not the only donations it receives. The library was 348 books when it started at *ECCC* in 2017. The next day it got the first donation of books: a 49.5 pound box shipped from Iowa arrived the morning of day two. Contained inside were about 50 books including a *Traveller* box set from 1977. Originally, only games from before 1999 would be allowed in, but within a couple of months it was obvious that cut out too many games that were now out of print and limited the ability to expose players to new games so the restriction was removed. Over the last two years the amount of love players and companies have shown through donations has been amazing. Leading up to *ECCC* 2019 the library is on track to have over 3000 books. This is nearly a ten-fold increase in size, often with generous support from publishers. But it is fans that have given the bulk of donations. One gentleman shared over 250 books and even donated a binder with the world his father created starting in the 1970s with the original edition of *D&D.* This was the world he and his friends played in over thirty years. All books donated will keep their notes and characters inside, meaning they just aren't the history of the hobby but the history of the players who donated them.

What else does the *Alexandria Library* do? The library provides GMs for events and has been training their volunteers to be RPG sommeliers meaning they will ask questions of a guest that is looking for something new and then direct them to a game that will suit their needs and tastes. Our volunteers have a love for what RPGs both as a means of recreation but because of their other uses. They run game sessions with at risk teens, and Vets with PTSD. At events they encourage others to do the same in their own areas.

What started out as an idea to just share some games has grown into something that is teaching others to play and how to use Gaming for good.