Writing With Canon

Hosts: [22][118][SARP] Kylindra (22nd Fleet, SB118, SARP)

Room Two • Session 3

[22][118][SARP] Kylindra 2/22/2020, 12:01:44 PM

Hello! And welcome to the panel writing with canon! This panel mostly focuses on some of the harder to pin down elements, but I'll be happy to talk about other aspects as well! In an effort to help demonstrate this, I'll be using sims from one of the fleets I'm in (with permission from the writers). But feel free to link your own good examples, if you feel they illustrate this!

But first, so we're all on the same page, I do want to define a few terms. (I've no doubt all of you understand this, but I know from experience that it's best to at least explain where I'm coming from.). Also, I like trivia. >_>

[16th] NX-1701-G 2/22/2020, 12:02:50 PM

Good luck!

[22][118][SARP] Kylindra 2/22/2020, 12:04:54 PM

First off, canon itself comes from the biblical canons (and apocrypha as well.) This seems fitting - the biblical canons were decided to be what fits, and often, official and roleplay canon is the same. For the purposes of this panel, I will define roleplay canon as what a group agrees on, whether by inaction or action, and official canon as whatever the author or official source defines as the official canon.

Cam 📚 2/22/2020, 12:06:51 PM

(so roleplay canon is midrash? 😉)

[22][118][SARP] Kylindra 2/22/2020, 12:07:11 PM

When we write, therefore, we are always adding to the roleplay canon, which I find kind of always a nice thing. The sims that come before create a ladder for future simmers to write on, and creates a chain of (of nothing else) memories that make up a fleet

(Hah! <_<)

Before I move on, I'm curious how others feel about the act of contributing to canon - how they approach it

[SARP] Immortal Cyan 2/22/2020, 12:09:29 PM

I would say that the most basic way to contribute to canon is by simply roleplaying within the canon.

But, I've done things like, writing wiki articles for tech on SARP, and that's another (if also basic) way to contribute to a setting's canon.

[22/OF] Kasterborous 2/22/2020, 12:10:45 PM

I like the idea of contributing to canon, though of course with some leeway in making things up that fit within set boundaries determined by canon? If that makes sense?

Lia 2/22/2020, 12:10:52 PM

My species the Ojnas where invented using canon as a base, I use the Tholians, Vulcans and even the Klingons to ensure they fitted in to the Star Trek universe.

Sheila Bailey [SB118] 2/22/2020, 12:11:57 PM

My character is an Elaysian and we don't know much about them in the shows so everything I write about them fits into the canon of 118, the role play group im a part of

Cam 📚 2/22/2020, 12:12:13 PM

I made a caniniod species for Trek, but based loosely on how Caitians had been created as a feliniod one

[Exo/SA]RaWolfe 2/22/2020, 12:12:36 PM

Contributing to the lore, 🤔 Or canon....as a player I do that as to update pages, try work with together with others in their stories. In GM form I let my players go free to a certain point, let them decide which route they take and keep them on a red line. This way they contribute with their own work towards a bigger piece 😄

[SB118] Groznin Smith 2/22/2020, 12:12:37 PM

I've made a lot of my own canon for Denobula

[22][118][SARP] Kylindra 2/22/2020, 12:12:39 PM

Yeah, that's a good place to start, looking at canon species and expanding them out more fully within your roleplay canon.

[SB118] German Galven 2/22/2020, 12:14:51 PM

I've tried to expand more on Barzans, but it was pretty difficult because she turned her attitude into something that rhymes with witchy

[22][118][SARP] Kylindra 2/22/2020, 12:14:55 PM

And to kinda touch on that, I wanted to examine three areas I feel are particularly important when writing canon: the theme(s), the tone, and the continuity. These are all writing elements - the tone is the atmosphere of the work that the author is trying to create in the reader, the theme is the main idea or underlying idea of the work (most works have multiple themes), and the continuity here is the consistency of the characteristics of the people, plot, objects and places.

Lia 2/22/2020, 12:16:44 PM

I started my species with a check list I made from reading the original species within the Trek universe, that way I don't end up with a Mary Sue.

[22][118][SARP] Kylindra 2/22/2020, 12:17:16 PM

That's one way to do it, yeah. Keeping within the sense of balance is a very useful thing to do.

[Exo/SA]RaWolfe 2/22/2020, 12:17:25 PM

To make it a bit familiar for Kyl, in SARP I run the plot of Stella (short name, long ship name lol). The tone is set by myself, the urgency for survival of their species is on the line, the theme is set on finding a new home and do anything to get it done. The

continuity is something depends more on the players and the plot and everything else is additional support.

[22][118][SARP] Kylindra 2/22/2020, 12:17:49 PM

Yeah, I was thinking of that

It's a bit harder in Trek, which can have multiple themes. But let me move on to the first example I've got

[SB118] Groznin Smith 2/22/2020, 12:19:48 PM

Examples!

[22][118][SARP] Kylindra 2/22/2020, 12:19:50 PM

For those of you who want to read the full sim, the source for the first example is here: https://groups.google.com/forum/#!topic/sb118-veritas/hPvGIfADLFs . This is by a writer by the name of Deliera/Blake. This sim, for context, is set in 2396, in a post Nemesis-continuity.

Lia 2/22/2020, 12:19:52 PM

I used a similar type of introduction for my Ojnas, a war and escape from their home worlds. That was the Tholian part of the mix, I even used the Dominion as a start point for the Tholians.

[22][118][SARP] Kylindra 2/22/2020, 12:21:08 PM

Apologies, my desktop client decided to stop working. One sec.
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Plasma weapons like these were relics.

Blake: The EM-33 was discontinued in the twenty-second century. They could be
brought onto colony world as antiques -- no one expected them to be fully
functional, just a wall ornament meant to provoke some kind of conversation about
history... but if restored, they could leave this kind of damage behind.

It couldn't be, though. Tydo had caught the EM-33 smugglers, right? They'd been
near-exclusive to Shadow's Edge, hadn't they? Tydo said she'd tracked them far and
wide across the planet, following their trades. They were sellers to highest
bidders.

Blake swallowed. Suddenly Tessara didn't seem so innocently paranoid. The EM-33
smugglers had indeed sold to the highest bidder -- and while Blake liked to
think the "highest bidder" could be characters like Kallo Ver, it was more
often they were to underground Romulan sects. Such definitions now encompassed
the remains of the Tal Shiar.
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This example is a great demonstration of continuity. It uses the phase pistols (the EM-33) from Enterprise, and then extends it by asking 'But in the time of TNG, it's all phasers. What happened to it?' and works to extend the continuity while staying within it.

[22][118][SARP] Kylindra 2/22/2020, 12:23:44 PM

(Also, to me, it reminds me of how it's often great to use small thoughts as major pieces in a moving plot.)

[SB118] Rahman 2/22/2020, 12:25:32 PM

Ah, kind of like a (Picard spoiler) ||"antique" Romulan bird of prey showing up||

[SB118] Rahman 2/22/2020, 12:26:38 PM(edited 2/22/2020, 12:26:56 PM)

I like the sim example shown because the canon reference serves a story purpose and isn't just a "look at me, I know a lot of Trek trivia" moment that sometimes I see in sims where the canon reference comes across like fan service

[22][118][SARP] Kylindra 2/22/2020, 12:26:51 PM

So, in this example, the writer was able to use the bones of what was already there and run with it. It makes the world breathe in a sense. (And feel free to voice your own examples, thoughts, or whatnot at any time.)

Yeah.. I'm guility of that from time to time. <_<

The big thing about this is, though, that it means you don't have to come up with the whole idea from nothing. You have seeds you can use to create your own plants, if you'll excuse the mixed metaphor. <_<

That said, I want to move on to a bit more trickier thing to incorporate: themes. Themes are more harder to borrow from, I feel, because you have to think about what the message you're trying to send is, and it can be harder to work in when you're interacting with other writers who may have their own thought.

[Exo/SA]RaWolfe 2/22/2020, 12:30:30 PM

I think that is why I like the setting of SARP so much, I mean its growing on me. @StarArmy made something unique, a community that is based on the canon that players created over time. Meaning that all new players contribute to the overall story, their contribution has impact, has a say and thats something I always found difficult in Star Trek.

[22][118][SARP] Kylindra 2/22/2020, 12:31:29 PM

This one comes from Groznin (who's in this room, even!) . The source is here: https://groups.google.com/forum/#!msg/sb118-gorkon/XRxs9ws2iiI/LISAFN1uBgAJ (it's a part of a JP).
`R.Smith: Son...`

`::Groznin did a double take, he hadn't been called son by his father since DS9, when he wasn't told he was no longer his parents son, He was know so confused he didn't know what to think anymore, thinking he was dreaming he discreetly pinched himself on the leg, he wasn't dreaming, this was real.::`

`R.Smith: We need to talk. Your mother and I have been talking and... we want to for starters apologise, what we did and said to you and Jang. ::His father stopped.:: It was wrong. We're sorry son.`

`::Groznin was now in disbelief, his parents had apologised, for saying what they had said about Klingons, for disowning him, and everything in between, he wasn't sure if this was some kind of sick practical joke or not. Needing to processes things Groznin stood up and placed his hands on his face, thinking for a moment.::`

[22][118][SARP] Kylindra 2/22/2020, 12:32:10 PM

@RaWolfe Yeah, it can be a lot harder in Trek which has closed a lot of avenues off, and that can make it harder to feel like your contributions matter.

[SB118] Groznin Smith 2/22/2020, 12:32:22 PM

I'm sorry for the awful spelling and grammar

[22][118][SARP] Kylindra 2/22/2020, 12:32:35 PM

Now, I picked this one because.. well, I admit it reminds me so strongly (it's not that bad) of Riker's relationship with his father in TNG.

One of the consistent themes of Star Trek is family. Whether it be the family of blood, or the family of choice many crews create for themselves. And it means when you get sims like this that use the theme, the moment .. well, it resonates. It sticks in you.

.. PHRASING, self.

Anyway. Like before, using themes means you can add parallels (like the example I thought of) and contrasts to the canon, or even just the roleplay canon.

How do simmers here like to use themes? Do you see them as useful, or..?

[SB118] Groznin Smith 2/22/2020, 12:35:36 PM

Hmm sometimes I guess

It depends on what i am writing

Sheila Bailey [SB118] 2/22/2020, 12:36:00 PM

I find themes to be useful in giving you ideas. pulling from the tv canon themes it can be a good launching point

[22/OF] Kasterborous 2/22/2020, 12:36:06 PM

i like to try and base missions off theme or as a whole as i think it could add a fair bit of depth, but I think it depends

[22][118][SARP] Kylindra 2/22/2020, 12:37:12 PM

(I should note I find themes more useful when I'm creating species history, or canon elements, because the theme of something strongly shows up in the details in implementation.)

[Exo/SA]RaWolfe 2/22/2020, 12:37:22 PM

Themes set the tone, the tone sets the motivation for the players. If something is not well thought out then it has effect on the whole chain.

[22][118][SARP] Kylindra 2/22/2020, 12:37:25 PM

(but I really like seeing them in character beats.)

[SB118] Groznin Smith 2/22/2020, 12:37:27 PM(edited 2/22/2020, 12:37:32 PM)

yeah

[22][118][SARP] Kylindra 2/22/2020, 12:37:44 PM

Yeah! And speaking of tone, that's next!

[SB118] German Galven 2/22/2020, 12:37:45 PM

I've found myself enjoying to write in a DS9 type of atmosphere. Or rather a mix of DS9 and Voyager

[22][118][SARP] Kylindra 2/22/2020, 12:37:50 PM

... and I'll level with you here.

Lia 2/22/2020, 12:37:58 PM

I'm not sure if it fits with what your saying, but I've found that others can aide a created species as well.   Imik now looked at this Human, "Sachzny left us many directions to follow, milkshakes were not among them. And if you please, I would wish to remain standing". She watched Taylor closely, why would this Human talk so fondly of Sachzny? Imik had never met her, only seen and heard Holo images of her. "I am not Sachzny Commander, unlike her I had to fight in the war. Our fighters took the war to our enemies, my squadron fought many battles and we lost good friends". She now bit back the rest of her words, if only she could touch his mind find out how he really thought and felt. This is part of an introduction of a new Ojnas character to someone who had met the species on another sim.

[22][118][SARP] Kylindra 2/22/2020, 12:38:12 PM

Tone is the most difficult thing for me to discuss. I apologize in advance.

(Like I had it as mood before someone pointed out I was super not talking about mood. <_<)

Sheila Bailey [SB118] 2/22/2020, 12:38:51 PM

Mood and tone can be similar

[22][118][SARP] Kylindra 2/22/2020, 12:39:07 PM

Sort of, yes, but mood and tone are pretty distinct.

Sheila Bailey [SB118] 2/22/2020, 12:39:30 PM

They can influence each other

[22][118][SARP] Kylindra 2/22/2020, 12:39:51 PM

So. Tone. Consider, briefly, Wonder Woman vs Batman v Superman.

(also, I'm never using PowerPoint again for notes for a presentation. <_<)

WW is far more optimistic in tone than the latter. This is somwhat easier with movies, but when we dive into franchises.. well.

To briefly touch on the topic, tone is hard to get right, and if you break it, you can break immersion really quickly. Consider a show that's upbeat for five seasons, then briefly turns grimdark.

That kind of atonal shift is part of the issues with writing with canon - you want to write your own tone, but it it clashes too much, it can break the reader's immersion.

Now that I've said this, let me give you an example of good use of tone.

This is from a fairly massive JP between three writers (I got one of the writers permission) and .. look, if I could link all of it, I would.

The source is: https://groups.google.com/forum/#!topic/sb118-veritas/qGv99B3TPKY

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Orrey: ::returning to the group and handing Teller a small glass filled with a
neon blue liquid that Jansen only shared with the most important people to him.::
And how much you can feel that you mean to us now.

Moonsong: Geoff… I know how hard this is. I have served on several different
ships. It is not easy to do, but… it is what we joined Starfleet for. Change is
part of the job. ::she smiled and guided him to a seat on the couch.::

Released from her embrace, Teller grateful accepted a seat and a drink.  Natalia,
however, continued clinging to his leg, mewling quietly.

Teller:  On some level, I know that...I knew it when I signed up, at least.
Looked forward to it, even.  Daring adventures across the cosmos, right?  ::He
laughed ruefully.::  What I didn't know was how important the people on this ship
would become to me.

Natalia continued to clutch at his leg even as he sat down. He had been a part of
her life since she was born. She soaked up the serenity she felt from her parents.
She didn't want him to leave, but she felt from her father that this was something
that had to be accepted whether she wanted to or not.

Natalia: Gonna miss you, Unca Tele. Love you.
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The tone is fairly solemn, but works with the theme of family again. It works well.

ReminderBot 2/22/2020, 12:45:04 PM

15-Minute Warning

[22][118][SARP] Kylindra 2/22/2020, 12:45:20 PM

I think my point here is also: you can stray from the main point (wow, I've lost track of time!) but you need to just avoid tones that sharply contrast with the parent work

.. unless you've written a roleplay canon that has done so

In which case, you should follow the tones of the roleplay canon.

(Okay, let me wrap this up, because I'm going over topic and I do really much want to hear what yo uthink about this.)

So just remember: when writing, first consider using your fellow roleplayers canon and work it into the main canon. This is just a nice thing to do - using what they did honors, in a sense, their contributions, and it's part of the joy of collaborative writing

Sheila Bailey [SB118] 2/22/2020, 12:47:23 PM

I do agree that tones shouldn't clash. You can have a happy tone in a war based story but it should still fit that main story. Like ds9. It would be wrong for them to be so happy and unconcerned with the war. However it doesn't mean they can't be happy at times

[SB118] Groznin Smith 2/22/2020, 12:47:33 PM

Yeah

Gotta have a balance

[22][118][SARP] Kylindra 2/22/2020, 12:47:53 PM

Second, small details really matter. If I say offhand, that I did an officer-exchange with the Romulan Republic, this implies, by necessity: 1) the RR exists. 2) They have a navy. 3) They are allied with them 4) they are sufficiently strong to have a officer-exchange program.

Sheila Bailey [SB118] 2/22/2020, 12:48:21 PM

If you create any details you should follow through with them

[22/OF] Kasterborous 2/22/2020, 12:48:24 PM

taking about canon - it's pretty interesting as i'm part of M4 (part of 22 fleet) and as such its collaborative canon, and i think that's pretty interesting that it shares between several sims

Lia 2/22/2020, 12:48:52 PM

I also think if a writer takes the other writers with them, a story arc can go from happy to sad without jarring the whole story.

[22][118][SARP] Kylindra 2/22/2020, 12:48:55 PM

Thirdly, using canon can actually help refine an idea an add interesting twists that you might not have considered at first.

For example, I've been joking about creating a bunny girl officer in Starfleet, but you could refine the idea to a bunny girl race, and then when creating how a race might function, consider how it might clash. This outline creates plenty of opportunities to tell your own story within the larger meta story.

(yeah, agreed - that is pretty interesting, and writers can help shift tone without it being jarring.)

That, in my opinion, is the true power of using canon - the tools and canvas is there for you, and the limitations spur creativity. This enables you to spend more time focusing on what story you want to tell with others.

[SA] Wes of Star Army 2/22/2020, 12:50:53 PM

For me I use a wiki to track the canon so it doesn't get lost. I need a way to refer back to it.

[22][118][SARP] Kylindra 2/22/2020, 12:51:08 PM

Yeah, wiki's are great for tracking canon.

[SB118] Groznin Smith 2/22/2020, 12:51:17 PM

We have a wiki in 118 too but at this point it's so extensive it's difficult sometimes to find particular things

[22][118][SARP] Kylindra 2/22/2020, 12:51:23 PM

So.. At this point, it's time for the Q&A portion of this panel

Lia 2/22/2020, 12:51:38 PM

I find the Elysium helps because the writers just seem to gel and run with an idea, and can still keep it within canon.

[22][118][SARP] Kylindra 2/22/2020, 12:51:45 PM

.. and I'll be answering questions in #680468458340745450 because lol, I know I should have DEFINITELY did a full run through

[22][118][SARP] Kylindra 2/22/2020, 12:51:51 PM

Sorry about that.

Lia 2/22/2020, 12:52:30 PM

Hey, at least you kept it interesting. Thanks for that.

Sheila Bailey [SB118] 2/22/2020, 12:52:47 PM

You do have some interesting points that could use further discussion

Neathler2/22/2020, 12:52:55 PM

Heh

[22][118][SARP] Kylindra 2/22/2020, 12:52:55 PM

[my verbal tick is working against me. 😦]

[SB118] German Galven 2/22/2020, 12:53:09 PM

.. Denobulans rock

ooo

Sheila Bailey [SB118] 2/22/2020, 12:53:27 PM

But can you see the quotes?

[22][118][SARP] Kylindra 2/22/2020, 12:53:31 PM

Anyway, thank everyone for showing up! (And the people who gave me permissions to use their sims.)

[SB118] German Galven 2/22/2020, 12:53:43 PM

I enjoyed it! @ʊ_ʊ

[Exo/SA]RaWolfe 2/22/2020, 12:53:47 PM

Thanks for hosting the panel @ʊ_ʊ applause!

[SB118] Groznin Smith 2/22/2020, 12:53:58 PM

Thanks!

Sheila Bailey [SB118] 2/22/2020, 12:54:01 PM

I look forward to going back through it for a more detailed look

Lia 2/22/2020, 12:54:14 PM

Yeah thank you @ʊ_ʊ

ReminderBot 2/22/2020, 12:55:03 PM

5-Minute Warning

Sheila Bailey [SB118] 2/22/2020, 12:55:11 PM

😬

[22][118][SARP] Kylindra 2/22/2020, 12:56:37 PM

you might want to wait for the event banner

since people will shuffle in then

Sheila Bailey [SB118] 2/22/2020, 12:56:53 PM

I accidentally sent that

[22][118][SARP] Kylindra 2/22/2020, 12:56:57 PM

ahh

[PF] AlexM 2/22/2020, 12:56:59 PM

Yeah, you were stating a bit early on me, haha.

Sheila Bailey [SB118] 2/22/2020, 12:57:13 PM

Meant to hit shift enter but just hit enter

[PF] AlexM 2/22/2020, 12:57:27 PM

If I had a quarter...

Lia 2/22/2020, 12:57:50 PM

I suffer from that as well, I call it fat finger syndrome.

Tuula - Langley Station 2/22/2020, 1:00:03 PM

Hello