

The Smythe-Worthington Foundation

Base assumption: time travel is possible, but you cannot change history. Alternatively, you *can* change history, but the act of doing so merely creates a new timeline and leaves yours untouched. Also: time travel is known, and common/cheap enough to allow non-governmental or non-military use.

The academic community did not react well to the discovery of practical time travel. On the one hand, people were finally and suddenly able to go Downtime and prove or disprove various pet theories, once and for all; on the other hand, people were finally and suddenly able to go Downtime and prove or disprove various pet theories, once and for all. There were regrettable incidents. Worse, there was no effective counter-measures put in place to prevent particular regrettable incidents from occurring again and again.

To give just one example: during one six-month period no less than seven hitherto respected academic institutions were involved in nine attempts to firebomb Shakespeare's Globe Theater, three of which were successful. All of this would have been tacitly ignored by Earth's governments --

after all, the firebombing in the past apparently wasn't directly affecting the main timeline -- but organizations and institutions were starting to attack each other Uptime as well as Downtime. At that point, the UN Security Council nations stepped in and created an international Time Security organization. Uniquely, the TSO doesn't act to protect the timeline **or** the past; it merely acts to keep any nonsense spawned by Downtime strictly *out* of Uptime.

That explicitly includes things like violence in the halls of academia over the culpability of Richard III, after that one infamous conference where the two factions each brought their own Richard along to argue the case. It was fascinating to watch, in its way, although there was some controversy when a third group brought in the corpses of the murdered princes in order to confront the two Richards with them. One mini-sweating sickness epidemic later, and the TSO had all that it needed to justify operating with a firm hand Uptime.

Still, there's a legitimate need for confirming historical data, and an interest in funding that sort of thing. Particularly if you're, say, an academic institution with fat endowments, and a hankering to get your hands on a recording of an original live performance of *Doctor Faustus*. Or perhaps your very own Christopher Marlowe,

suitably dewormed and vaccinated and so forth. For *that* sort of thing, the TSO authorizes private contractors to go in, do the job, and come back. Because if the TSO doesn't, it'll still happen anyway. Better to have recognized groups on the job.

And, indeed, the Smythe-Worthington Foundation is one of the more prestigious groups in that regard. With offices in London, New York, Athens, Beijing, and Buenos Aires, it specializes in filling in the holes of academic theorists. Want to see what agricultural yields were like in the Incan Empire? They can get you yearly photographs on select croplands. Need evidence that the Vikings visited New England? They'll track down where the longboats beached themselves. Trying to prove linguistic shifts in Cantonese? They'll bring back all the surreptitious audio coverage that you could want. Just be prepared to pay for the information. And not ask any more questions than the ones that you've already purchased the answers for.

A Smythe-Worthington Field Team generally consists of four to six people. All Team members are expected to be in decent shape, know the local era and language well enough to at least pass as indigenous foreigners, and have some familiarity with local weapons. Past that, there's usually somebody who can play with documents,

somebody who can talk to people, somebody who can break into things, and a few people who can initiate and/or prevent violence from taking place. A fairly straightforward team of player characters, in other words.

There are four things in particular to remember about this campaign setting:

- The nature of time travel is such that failure in the past is reversible. If the team doesn't succeed the first time, going back Uptime resets the Downtime situation. The only limiting factor is the expense of time travel itself, and time travel is quite cheap in this setting.
- The TSO enforces a rule: no jumps of less than a hundred years Downtime. If it didn't, the TSO would get hammered by every Uptime government in the world. So, no exceptions there.
- Sometimes two or more Teams from different Uptime groups will show up in the same Downtime 'instance.' When this happens, the rule of thumb (which is apparently honored by the TSO) is that actually killing, maiming, or stranding a rival Uptimer Downtime crosses a line. Everything else is fine, including acts against Downtimers.

- Finally, it should be fairly obvious that individuals can get away with a certain amount of sociopathy, just as long as they restrict themselves to Downtimers. Not every Uptimer indulges, of course. Perhaps not even most. But there aren't very many internal checks in place to prevent particular kinds of abuses.

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