A FEW LAST WORDS

DARRYL FRANCIS
Hounslow, Middlesex, England

Let us begin by supposing that you are a dedicated logologist who has spent many years working on a variety of logological problems. Over the years you have become increasingly annoyed with the amount of time that you have had to spend searching for particular words in various reference works. Since no two dictionaries contain the same stock of words, you may have to search many dictionaries until one or another of them verifies the word you are seeking to identify. Of course, if none of the major dictionaries of the English language contains the word, you then have to extend your search to other more specialized dictionaries -- medical dictionaries, biographical dictionaries, gazetteers, and so on.

In an attempt to deal with this problem, you decide to compile your very own dictionary. This dictionary will list, in alphabetical order, the words, names and terms from the major English-language dictionaries and the other specialized dictionaries which you as a logologist use extensively. Of course, once such a dictionary has been compiled there will be no guarantee that it does in fact contain all words, names and terms. Indeed, we can positively guarantee just the opposite -- the dictionary will contain only a fraction of all the words, names and terms in the English language. What is and what is not in the super-dictionary really depends on how wide you cast your net in choosing reference works whose contents are to be included in the super-dictionary. Nevertheless, the dictionary will still be the most comprehensive listing of words, names and terms ever to exist in the English language, and for this reason will be useful to logologists.

While no such dictionary exists -- or, at any rate, is known to us to exist -- it is a useful hypothetical dictionary for the logologist to bear in mind when posing and attempting to answer a variety of word problems.

In this article we shall tackle one such problem and use the hypothetical dictionary in answering it. The problem is this: what is the last word, name or term beginning with each of the 26 letters?

For A, the last complete word is Band C, this last uncapitalized word;

For E, the absolute word is McKinley's.

Without further ado we now begin:

As far as capitalization is concerned, we find:

A. AJODHYA, the adjective of the adjective.

B. BZURA and the USSR.

C. CZECHOSLOVAKIA, the name of a river.

D. DZUETEIN.

E. EZZOLI and the USSR.

F. EZZULIN.

G. GIZZARD, a bird.

H. HETARIA, a bird.

I. IZZIA HETARIA, the name of a river.

J. JAZZE and the USSR.

K. KYZYL, the name of a city.

L. LEXYLAND, the name of the adjective of the adjective.

M. MZABITE, the name of a river.

N. NEVA and the USSR.

O. OZZI.

P. PONIBUA and the USSR.

Q. QIZZARD, a bird.

R. RUYAN, the name of a city.

S. SASSO, the name of a city.

T. TISSLAR.

U. UZZARD, a bird.

V. VIZZARD, a bird.

W. WIZZARD, a bird.

X. XIZZARD, a bird.

Y. YAZZARD, a bird.

Z. ZIZZARD, a bird.

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Without further ado, let us look at some of our results. The last word beginning with A is probably AZZY, a provincial English word used in referring to a wayward child. The last uncapitalized word under B is likely to be BYZEN, a dialect word for a disgraceful spectacle. Beyond BYZEN there seem to exist many capitalized words, mostly foreign place names. There's BZenEC, BZIP, BZOVik, BZura and BZYB. However, the honors go to BZYCH, a town in the USSR. For C the last uncapitalized word that we have been able to find is CZIGANY, a gipsy. This word appears to have entered the English language from Hungarian. After CZIGANY we can find only capitalized words; examples include CZOlGOSz (President McKinley's assassin), CZoRTKow, CZUCzor and CZUDin. But Poland comes in last with CZYZew, a place name. For D the last uncapitalized word is probably Dzo, a yak-cow hybrid. As with B and C, this is followed by a number of capitalized words. The last of these is DZYUBIN, the surname of a Russian poet who died in 1935.

For E, the last uncapitalized word is likely to be EYTHE, an obsolete word for a harrow. So far, this is the first of the last words not to use a Z. But once again there is a multitude of proper names beyond this, most of them using a Z. There's EZRIHEL, EZZARD and EZZOLIED, but the winner seems to be the two-word place name EZ ZUETina, a town in the northern part of Libya. Under F, the last uncapitalized word is FYX, an alternative spelling of the common everyday word fix. Beyond FYX we find FYzABAd-CUM-AJODHYA, a city in northern India. GYzzARN, an old word meaning a gizzard, is probably the final uncapitalized word beginning with G, while GZOWSKI, the surname of a Russian-Canadian engineer and financier who died in 1898, is the very last capitalized entry. For H, we have the unusual situation where the very last word seems to be an uncapitalized one. The word is HYZONE, a chemical name for triatomic hydrogen. Obviously, this name has been formed by analogy with OZONE, the name for triatomic oxygen.

Onward to I! The last uncapitalized entry under this letter is most likely to be IZZAT, a reputation. Beyond IZZAT there are only capitalized words, the last of which seems to be the Biblical name IZZIAH. The final entry under J, however, could well be an uncapitalized one; JYWEL, an obsolete form of JEWel, seems to beat everything else. K's last uncapitalized entry is KYX, a kind of weed. Proper names proliferate beyond KYX, though. There are hundreds of Russian place names beginning with the letters KYZYL, which isn't surprising when you learn that KYZYL is the Russian word for red. The outright winner in the K stakes, though, is the name of a village in the Kazakh SSR, KZYL-TUU. For L, we find LYXOSE, a type of sugar, as the last uncapitalized word. As far as capitalized words go, we have managed to find LYZHA, the name of a river in the USSR. At M, the last capitalized word is the adjective MYZOSTOMOUS, pertaining to Myzostomida, an order of worms. After this there are several capitalized words, including MZABITE, MZENSK, MZHAVANADZE and MZOMBE. Last of all,
though, is another river in the USSR, MZYMTA. NYXIS, a wound, is the last uncapitalized entry at N, but as usual is beaten by several capitalized words: NZAMBI, NZORE and NZORO. Finally, there's NZUBUKA, a town in Tanganyika, which is now called Tanzania.

And so to O. OZOTYPE, a photographic term for a particular type of printing, may be the last word to begin with a lower-case O. After OZOTYPE we find OZRIEL, OZYMANDIAS and OZZIE. Lastly, there is OZZIFRE, a town in what used to be Equatorial Africa but is now called Chad. Last under P to begin without a capital letter is PYX-VEIL, a cloth used in the Roman Catholic Church to veil the pyx, a box in which the reserved Eucharist is kept. Beyond this we find PZHAROVKA, a Russian place name. Q, always an interesting letter, offers QWICHE, an obsolete dialect spelling of which is the last uncapitalized word in that section. After QWICHE there are the proper names QYRGHYZ, a Turkic language, and QYTETISTALIN, a city of Albania. As for R, the last uncapitalized word is likely to be RYVER, an obsolete spelling of river. However, there are the usual proper names beyond this. A few are RZEWUSKI, RHANITCHA and RZHEV. Last of all, there is RZSAVSKY, yet another town in the USSR.

A digression: what possibility is there that all these Russian geographical names have been deliberately made up by the Russians to confuse us logologists? The situation reminds us somewhat of all the supposedly 160-year-old men and women in the USSR, not to mention other exorbitant Russian claims!

At S the last uncapitalized word is SZOPELKA, a musical instrument of (surprise, surprise) Russia. SZYMRYCH, the name of a Polish town, looks like it is the very last entry under S. For T, TZUTE, which is uncapitalized, is one of the final entries. This is a cotton head covering used by Guatemalans. Finally under T there is TZYWVEL, a German mathematician who died in 1544.

The absolute last entry under U is an uncapitalized one -- UZZLE, a type of thrush, or any of several related birds. Last under V to be uncapitalized is VYVE, a very old and long-obsolete spelling of wife. This is surpassed by another Russian town name: VYZVOZ. WYWANDE, an obsolete word meaning living, is the last uncapitalized word beginning with W. However, the overall winner in the W stakes is the name of a Polish mountain range, WYZYNA KRAKOWSKO-CZESTOCHOWSKA. Under X, the last word is the uncapitalized XYSTUS, a tree-lined walk. Another uncapitalized word checks in as the last one under Y: the palindromic YZY, an obsolete verb meaning to see.

The last entry under Z is especially interesting as it is also the last word in our hypothetical dictionary. It may also possibly be the last word in the English language, depending on what we decide to include or exclude in our dictionary. The last few entries in the Z section of the dictionary will certainly include words like ZYZZLE, ZYZZOGETON and ZYZZYVA. The last of these three is a South American instrument. A slang verb meaning our super rectories, a ZIZZ in our dialect, in the Los Angeles telephone directory.
American insect. ZZELLE, a recorded U.S. feminine proper name, might be in the dictionary. So too might ZZXJOANW, a musical instrument. And we shouldn't overlook the possibility of ZZZZ, a slang verb meaning *to snore*, being in the dictionary. If in compiling our super-dictionary we had included entries from telephone directories, a moot point, then we would find both ZZZZZ and ZZZ-ZZZ in our dictionary. The first is the name of a wake-up service in the Los Angeles directory, and the second is a business organization in the Indianapolis directory.

No doubt readers of Word Ways will be able to improve on many of the words offered in this article by turning to successively obscurer reference sources. Perhaps they will communicate their improvements to us via the editor.