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Close Encounters of a Different Kind: A Study of Science Fiction Fan Culture and Its Interactions with Multiple Literacies

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CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF A DIFFERENT KIND:

A STUDY OF SCIENCE FICTION FAN CULTURE AND

ITS INTERACTIONS WITH MULTIPLE LITERACIES

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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Title: Close Encounters of a Different Kind: A Study of Science Fiction Fan Culture and
Its Interactions with Multiple Literacies

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This study reveals science fiction fan culture as it was observed during a science fiction convention in southern California in 2009. Conventions, although social gatherings, are also places where learning takes place, and the culture is shared. The researcher, a fan herself, collected demographic data through an anonymous survey, then interviewed several fans to develop information about their educational history, cultural attitudes, and interactions with text. The evidence presented shows this group identifies itself as a subculture with its own language, arts, values, and traditions. Fandom also exhibits many characteristics of an affinity group as described by Gee (2003), in that its members are united by a common cause, and hold similar attitudes toward knowledge acquisition and information sharing.

After describing who science fiction fans are, this study explores the many types of texts with which fans interact, and the types of literacy they demonstrate by doing so. In addition to being proficient readers of traditional text, fans demonstrate strong visual, computer, and genre literacy skills. Fans use these skills to interact with multiple forms of media including books, movies, television, art, blogs, fan fiction, and video games, to name a few. Furthermore, fan interests are shown to span a variety of text types including mainstream literature and nonfiction, as well as other genres.

Finally, the study discusses the implications some of its findings may have for education. Importantly, it appears that a free reading program (especially as described by Krashen in 1993), which encourages students to read what they choose, would be an efficacious method of motivating students to practice higher order thinking skills. Furthermore, students should be encouraged to interact with multiple types of texts across a variety of genre including, but not limited to, science fiction. This implies that students need access to a variety of reading material including classics, genre literature, comic books, and graphic novels.

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To science fiction, which gave me a place to go while I was growing up. To the authors, directors and other creators that led me to new places. To LASFS that holds such a fun convention and let me do my work there.

Lastly, but most importantly, to the fans who participated, would have participated, or were just there. This dissertation is about community. Thank you for being a community, and letting me be a part of it.

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CHAPTER 1

TO SEEK OUT A NEW CIVILIZATION[1]

A beginning is the time for taking the most delicate care that the balances are correct.

-- Frank Herbert, *Dune*[2]

I am a fan. As with many fans (or *fen* as we say) my way of doing something is

not always the traditional way of doing that thing. That fact is perhaps first noticeable by

the title of this dissertation, which was inspired by a Steven Spielberg movie[3]. The title of

this chapter was an easy one. I was hoping to attend an international convention to see

how the two subcultures (American and Japanese) interacted when it was suggested that I

would have to prove that science fiction fandom was a subculture first. I took my

inspiration for that concept and this chapter's main title from the most popular of all

science fiction television shows: *Star Trek* (now known as The Original Series). Future

chapters also take their titles from various series in the world created by Gene

Roddenberry. (Fans often call any group of items that occur in a unified time, place,

theory or philosophy a world.)

However, this is also a study of multiple literacies; so I chose to model my

beginnings after a style used by many science fiction authors (e.g. Frank Herbert or Bruce

Stirling) who will excerpt writings from the worlds they have created and insert them at

the beginnings of their chapters. Each of my chapters will, therefore, also begin with a

famous quote from the world of my favorite science fiction authors. In the case of this

chapter, I chose this title because it describes beginnings as a delicate balance and this

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[1] Inspired by the opening sequence of *Star Trek: The Original Series*
[2] (p. 3)
[3] *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (Spielberg, 1977).

paper describes the delicate balance the requirements of academia and the story of fandom.

Introduction

The study of science fiction and those who partake of it has often been a subject of controversy. Forty years ago, Suvin (1979) claimed that science fiction "has been a suppressed and neglected, often materially and most always ideologically persecuted tradition" (p. 87). More recently, Matt Hills (2002) has felt it necessary to describe the juxtaposition between the scholars who study science fiction and the fans who explore their genre. Proponents of both mainstream literature and the genre have echoed this conflict since the publication of the earliest science fiction novels at the turn of the twentieth century. One of the earliest recorded battles was waged between Henry James and H.G. Wells. According to Scholes and Rabkin (1977), James appreciated Wells' talent but wanted Wells to write with more discipline and elegance. Wells, on the other hand, argued that James' type of fiction left out real life in favor of orderliness.

The quarrel between the fictions continued through the first half of the next century. In a lecture given at the University of Chicago, Robert Heinlein (1959a) cited an editorial in *The Saturday Review* that described science fiction as a "crude form of entertainment" (p. 40). In his response, Heinlein labeled the statement "unadulterated tosh" (p. 41) and used the term "ignorant" several times when referring to the author of that article. Fans, when speaking in community, simply refer to Sturgeon's Law, which its creator, Theodore Sturgeon called his "revelation" which describes the quality of most science fiction and mainstream literature. Sturgeon, it appears, finally refined it and wrote it down in *Venture* magazine in 1958.

I repeat Sturgeon's Revelation, which was wrung out of me after twenty years of wearying defense of science fiction against attacks of people who used the worst examples of the field for ammunition, and whose conclusion was that ninety percent of SF is crud.

Using the same standards that categorize 90% of science fiction as trash, crud, or crap, it can be argued that 90% of film, literature, consumer goods, etc. are crap. In other words, the claim (or fact) that 90% of science fiction is crap is ultimately uninformative, because science fiction conforms to the same trends of quality as all other art forms. (as cited in http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sturgeon%27s_Law)

Science fiction fans admit that not everything in their genre is good. For example, one participant in this study, Edradour, said of a novel recommended to him "I'm basically reading it now because it's kind of soporific. I read it before bed to unwind. It's not particularly challenging and it's not particularly exciting." However, they have also read widely enough to know that the same holds true in other genres and the mainstream as well. (For a list of the creators[4] named as fan favorites at the convention, see Appendix Q.) Further, Roberts (1990) tells us that "good readers find deep pleasure and lasting satisfaction not only when reading the good stories their favorite genre produces but even when they are reading the stories they feel are poor" (p. 4). Yes, members of fandom have read and enjoyed bad books; but we do understand they are bad. We also know that non-fans have also done so; it's why they are called guilty pleasures.

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[4] Because fans are multiliterate, producers of the genre include among others authors, artists, musicians, artists and television and movie producers. I use the term "creators" to describe all of these makers of the genre.

It is not, however, just the mainstream that has belittled science fiction. Scholars who supposedly support science fiction have written rather shamefacedly about their genre. For example, Suvin (1979) says "SF has historically had one of its roots in the compost heap of […] juvenile or popular subliterature" (p. 22). This attitude has often been reflected in the feelings of the fans. Knight (1967) perhaps describes best how fans have felt about their literature.

> The question of the respectability of science fiction has vexed a lot of the people who read it. Thousands, I suppose, have torn off the covers of science fiction magazines before taking them home, and many must have felt guiltily doubtful about the contents even then. Science fiction has long had, still has a dubious aura; we read it for a certain special kind of satisfaction, but we are frequently aware that according to ordinary standards we ought not to like it. (pp. 2-3)

As a fan, I empathize with Knight's statement, and the feelings of isolation common to many of the genre's readers. As a teenager in the early 1970s, my goal was to read every science fiction novel at the small branch of my local library. Because my mother approved of all the reading I was doing, I came very close to achieving my objective. However, I never told her what was in my books. Somehow I knew she probably would not understand my obsession with this "escapist" literature. Even some of the good books I read, such as Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land* and Huxley's *Brave New World*[5], which explored attitudes toward sexuality, would never have been considered appropriate for a 14-year old girl. Unfortunately, some of those books were

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[5] Because these texts are not actually used as references, but rather as examples, I have created a separate list for these works and others like them in Appendix S.

not just inappropriate; many of them were just poor literature. As Heinlein (1959a) points out

> I do not think that we are likely to have a large volume of competent, literate speculative fiction in the foreseeable future. Those of you who are addicted to it in quantity must perforce resign yourselves to reading much that is second rate. (p. 51)

I suspect my teenage self would have agreed with Mr. Heinlein if I had heard him say these words. Fans have always known that not every text labeled science fiction is a great work of literature; but, too often all of science fiction has been lumped together as trash.

Not only has the literature been judged to be of questionable respectability, fans themselves are often not portrayed in a flattering light. In a radio interview, Steve Almond (2009) identifies the problem critics seem to have with science fiction.

> … critics who are invested in the idea of striking a sophisticated pose always, at all times, again, look at the parts of themselves, the 16, 17, 18-year old kid, the 13-year old kid who was discovering Vonnegut and falling in love with Vonnegut and they just want to disavow that person. Like he's some country bumpkin who can't have a possible sense of what real literature is supposed to be like. It's a kind of collective shame.

Fans in the above description are portrayed as immature and unsophisticated.

Other contemporary depictions of fans are even less flattering. In a recent song, *Online*, country star Brad Paisley (Paisley, Duboce, & Lovelace, 2007) used the stereotype of the fat, unsuccessful fan to criticize technology and online dating:

I work down at the Pizza Pit

And I drive an old Hyundai

I still live with my mom and dad

I am five foot three and overweight

I'm a sci fi fanatic, a mild asthmatic

And I've never been to second base

While it is true that some fans are overweight, unsuccessful males, this is also true of many others groups in American culture.

Further, in a review of Shari Caudron's book, *Who are These People Anyway? A Personal Journey into the Heart of Fanatical Passion in America,* Walker (2007) tells readers that Ms. Caudron "tries to be respectful, even serious, as an outsider in these subcultures [which include Barbie and GI Joe collectors], but she's naturally unable to keep from giggling over such oddities as […] 'filking' (science fiction-or fantasy-themed folk singing)" (p. 120). This description was provided to a bored, captive audience (airplane passengers reading an in-flight magazine) who may know nothing about this science fiction subgenre. Fan participants in the current study also reported being laughed at by the media as they were discovering fandom. One of my conversational partners, Thaddeus, reported seeing occasional television news stories that were "usually derisive."

Even outlets that should be more sympathetic have insulted the community. An article in *Omni* magazine went so far as to call science fiction fans "a strange breed" (DeCarlo, 1994). The implication seems clear; fans are weird, immature, geeky, refugees from reality rather than talented individuals with real mainstream lives. Perhaps it is comments and attitudes like these that have made fandom cautious when speaking to

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academics or writers who might not share its passion. Matt Hills (2005) provides an explanation for this when he describes the rebuff fans have received when they tried to interact with academia: "the dedicated fan is […] likely to find that their form of expertise may be devalued in favour of scholarly Theory in the seminar room" (p. 21). Hills (2002) explains this further in the introduction to his monograph, *Fan Cultures*, in which he describes the Otherness each group impresses on the other. While academia seeks system and rigor in the subject, fandom values passion and commitment to the object. And while academia tends to support cultural norms, fandom contests these norms, adhering to an "improper" identity and displaying a need to defend itself or justify its commitment to something not as highly valued by the mainstream.

This study was designed, in part, to open more doors between the worlds of science fiction fandom and other more accepted literature communities, as well as to fill a void in the research about this misdescribed community. As Geertz (1973) so aptly phrases it, "[u]nderstanding a people's culture exposes their normalness without reducing their particularity" (p. 14). Perhaps a description of what fandom looks like and does will show this study's readers the value of understanding fan cultures.

While science fiction fandom may consider itself to be a culture, it also shares many characteristics with James Paul Gee's (2003) *affinity group*, which he defines as a group that is "bonded primarily through shared endeavors, goals and practices and not shared race, gender, nation, ethnicity, or culture" (p. 197). As we will see in later chapters, the implicit common endeavors for science fiction fans are to support the creation of material for their genre and to encourage others to develop the skills necessary to be quality consumers of the genre. Further, many science fiction fans seek to develop

the ideals and concepts considered in their genre or to combat the problems presented through their media; for example, there are rocket scientists in fandom who are doing the research to put humanity into space and teachers working to achieve gender equality.

Education, formal and informal, is a key component of the aforementioned endeavors. Fans know that if there are no readers or critical consumers of media then the market for the books, games or movies they want to read, write, or use will be too small to be economically viable. It therefore behooves them to participate in the learning of others. How that learning occurs is part of this study. As Gee (n.d.) points out

> Learning differs from individual to individual, so we need to base our discussions around actual cases of actual people learning. This does not say, however, that no generality exists here. How any one of us learns throws light, both by comparison and contrast, on how others learn. Learning is not infinitely variable and there are patterns and principles to be discovered, patterns and principles that ultimately constitute a theory of learning. (pp. 3-4)

It appears then that the effectiveness of affinity groups and the related learning principles and features of such groups are strongly reflected in the science fiction community; fandom is a practical model demonstrating the value of such groups to active learning, and offers a rich area for describing how that learning takes place.

Members of fandom develop two levels of knowledge. First, science fiction fans usually have an extensive knowledge of the genre and the community, understanding and participating in a variety of aspects of the genre and the community's activities. Second, members of fandom will often have an intensive knowledge in one or more fields, either within the genre or from outside it, but often of use to the community. For example, a fan

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might be an expert on a television series within the genre (with extensive knowledge of how and why stories were created) and also be a zoologist (with information about possible alien biology) working in the mainstream. Both of these types of knowledge are features of an affinity group (Gee, 2003). It should be noted here, that according to Gee (2003), much of the knowledge within the affinity group is tacit within the group and distributed across it. It is the development and value of these ways of knowing that lend relevance to this study.

Some academics might argue that there is still no need to study this community because it is just a group of fans, like any other fan group. There may be some truth to this argument; however, as Bacon-Smith (2000) points out, science fiction fandom is one of the oldest versions of interest-based cultures. "[S]cience fiction is where the form began. The prototype for the generation-X fanzine is here, for the media e-mail list, for the mystery weekend, for the romance convention" (p. 5). Coppa (2006) supports this when she identifies comics fandom as "another kind of offshoot of science fiction fandom" (p. 54). Science fiction fandom should be of interest to academics because it is a role model for other special interest groups, especially those with a textual focus.

This ethnographic-like study views fandom in three dimensions. First, this study will describe in depth the characteristics, values, attitudes, traditions, and practices most commonly demonstrated by members of this culture as they are manifested at one of its most common gatherings, the convention. Second, it will describe a cultural group formed around the science fiction genre, and it will demonstrate that this multiliterate[6] community is a cohesive entity meeting the definition of a cultural group. Finally, this

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[6] The variety of literacies practiced by science fiction fans will be described in detail in Chapter 2 of this paper.

study will consider how understanding the science fiction community will describe how multiliteracies may ultimately be developed. However, this study will not look at one important aspect of this group: online fandom, which exists almost completely in a virtual/textual world. Instead, this study will focus on fan culture as it is represented in the physical world--at a science fiction convention.

Focus Questions

The following questions have provided focus to this study:

1) In what ways does science fiction fandom demonstrate the characteristics of a cultural group, based upon observations made at a science fiction convention and the testimony of science fiction fans? What are the characteristics of fan culture as seen from inside that culture? What makes science fiction fan culture different from the mainstream, especially from the viewpoint of the fans? In what ways are fan culture and the mainstream similar? How can fan culture support and encourage the goals of mainstream culture?

2) In what ways does science fiction fandom demonstrate the features and learning principles reflected in an affinity group? Theorizing from the attitudes expressed by fans and using an analysis of the activities observed at a science fiction convention, how can fandom encourage and support these principles in the larger world community?

In order to describe the community and explore the abovementioned questions, this study will be divided into several sections. Chapter 2 attempts to define science fiction. Next the chapter will provide a very brief history of the literature upon which fandom is based. Finally, it will touch briefly on the history of fandom itself. Chapter 3

will explain the frameworks and methods used to conduct this study. The centerpiece of this study will be a description, along the lines of an ethnography, the highlights of which will be found in Chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 4 will provide readers with a description of the environment and activities in which fans interact; while Chapter 5 will describe the fans themselves. Chapter 6 will consider some of the major themes discovered during the data collection portion of this paper, especially those that deal with the activities that unify fandom and help make it into a group. Chapter 7 will then spend some time on the implications of this research and consider where further research should go. Finally, in Chapter 8, I will take the opportunity to discuss what I have learned about myself and my relationship to this community during my personal trek through fannish culture as an academician.

As the description of Chapter 8 may indicate, this project is both an academic activity and a journey of self-exploration. This research is being conducted by a participant-observer who makes no claim of objectivity. When I was about ten years old, my mother brought home a book from the library for me to read; it had won the Newberry Medal so my mother assumed her bookworm child would enjoy it. That novel, Madeleine L'Engle's (1963) *A Wrinkle in Time*, was my first encounter with science fiction. It began a lifelong passion with the genre. It was then that I began exploring the science fiction section of my local library. I was too young to stay up for the first run of *Star Trek,* but I watched it religiously when it and *Lost In Space* were aired in syndication about the time I reached junior high school. I attended my first convention, Panopticon, a celebration of the popular British television series *Doctor Who* featuring one of its stars, Tom Baker, as the guest speaker, sometime in the mid-1980s in St. Louis, MO. Since then

I have attended regional conventions in St. Louis, Missouri; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Jacksonville, Florida; and Los Angeles, California to name a few. My family annually attends the World Science Fiction Convention held around the world in a different city each year.[7] As an active member of the science fiction community, I regularly meet my friends at conventions to expand my enjoyment and knowledge of alternative realities and speculative fiction. While I am at a convention, I may volunteer at a fan table, interact with popular writers and creators at panels, attend book signings or room parties, assist or compete in the Masquerade, or shop at the Art Show or in the Dealers' Room (all of which will be described later in this study). As an academician and literacy specialist, I am sometimes called upon to serve on panels discussing the use of science fiction in the classroom or how we as fans can support print literacy in the schools. My husband of over twenty years is also a fan, donating his knowledge as a scientist and physician to writers and creators so that their invented aliens can look real and the futuristic medicine and xenobiology they describe can appear plausible. Our adult son is fluent, not only in the language used in traditional print literacy, but also in the languages used by gamers and computer artists. Obviously, this study is highly biased; it cannot be anything else. It is a reflection of its writer, who is both a scholar and a fan. I can only hope that by providing a thorough description of the community, often framed in the words of many of the community's participants, I will help readers will come to a greater understanding of the culture that binds the community that is science fiction fandom.

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[7] Recent WorldCons in which my family and I have participated include Chicago, Illinois; Baltimore, MD; San Antonio, TX; San Francisco, CA; Edinburgh, Scotland; and Montreal, Canada to name a few.

CHAPTER 2

WHERE FEW HAVE GONE BEFORE[8]

It means what we point to when we say it.[9]

-- Damon Knight

In recent years, science fiction has attracted more attention by researchers; but the trend has been to study the literature, or to theorize about fandom as a large group. It has been decades since fans have been counted, and or described as individuals. Hence, this chapter's title which is from the opening of the second *Star Trek* television series. I chose it because it invokes that feeling of moving forward or beyond that is pervasive at a science fiction convention. The textual quote I chose illustrates the frustration scholars may feel when they are asked to define the genre. Fans know what their genre is: anything that they choose to include within its boundaries. This chapter attempts to define a very loosely defined genre and then explores the ideas of other writers.

What Is Science Fiction?

One argument that science fiction fandom may be considered to be a culture can be construed from a definition of culture given by Matt Hills (2005), where he describes culture as text based.

> An equation underpinning the majority of work in cultural theory is thus that culture, no matter what its precise definition, is textual in the broadest sense. Whole ways of life are sedimented in texts: cultural structurings or orderings operate in and through texts: culture is cultic through the production of new texts and affect is expressed through and in relation to texts. (p. 25)

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[8] Inspired by the opening sequeunce of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*
[9] Knight,1969, p. 1

Since fandom is based on a genre (or class of text in its many forms), it can readily be defined as a cultural group, using Hills' description of interaction with text as a definer of culture. Thus, it is appropriate here to define the genre with which the members of this community have been interacting. This is a task more easily proposed than accomplished, since there are so many differences of opinion among both professionals and fans. Kincaid (2003) tells us that a "definition attempts to fix the pattern that applies to science fiction, but the pattern […] is in constant flux, and no definition has successfully managed to encompass all that it is, all that it has been, and all that it might be" (p. 414). This problem has led Grand Master[10] Damon Knight (1967) to explain

> [t]hat the term "science fiction" is a misnomer, that trying to get two enthusiasts to agree on a definition of it leads only to bloody knuckles; that better labels have been devised (Heinlein's suggestion, "speculative fiction", is the best, I think), but that we're stuck with this one; and it will do us no particular harm to remember that, like "The Saturday Evening Post", it means what we point to when we say it. (p. 1)

The problem with Knight's comment is that while it is broad enough to include a variety of aspects of the science fiction genre, it is flawed, in that it also includes a variety of texts that might not be considered science fiction by fans. Grand Master Robert Heinlein's (1959b) offers a more specific definition when he insists that science fiction must use the scientific method and reflect the knowledge of the time while taking into account how these will effect humanity. Another grand master, Ray Bradbury, believes the emphasis should be on the study of humanity over science, as evidenced by his statement that "[s]cience fiction is really sociological studies of the future, things that the

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[10] For a definition of the title of Grand Master and list of persons recognized by this title see Appendix N.

writer believes are going to happen by putting two and two together" (as cited in McNeilly, 1974, p. 17). Already, it becomes apparent that science fiction professionals and aficionados cannot fully agree on the focus of their genre. Over time, the genre has become even more difficult to define. An attempt to collect the definitions of science fiction was made by a fan, Neyir Cenk Gökçe, who has made a list, which can be found in Appendix P, of 52 definitions proposed by numerous authors and critics.

The problem occurs, in part, because science fiction can be divided into a wide variety of categories: hard science fiction (Robert Heinlein's *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*), soft science fiction (Ray Bradbury's *Martian Chronicles)*, cyberpunk (William Gibson's *Neuromancer*), utopian or dystopian fiction (Aldus Huxley's *Brave New World*) and space opera (George Lucas's *Star Wars*) to name a just few. *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* adds books on UFOs and the paranormal into the mix (Kincaid, 2003). New categories of the genre are added to the list by authors, publishers and fans annually, which makes the problem of definition even more complicated

Brian Aldiss (1973) continues the expansion of the definition of the genre as he struggles through the limits of what he should include in his monograph, telling readers that "[i]n many cases, it is impossible to separate science fiction from science fantasy, or either from fantasy, since both genres are part of fantasy" (p. 8). Aldiss (1973) then implicitly adds the subgenre horror to his definition by telling us that science fiction writers have "brought the principle of horrid revelation to a fine art" (p. 19). Many respected science fiction authors have been known to cross the boundaries into these supposedly separate genres. Scholes and Rabkin (1977) point out that classic science

fiction writer Alfred Bester in *The Stars My Destination* (originally published in 1956) was

> not concerned with extrapolating the future. He is telling a fairy tale, a moral
> fable, using his exotic future world as a dazzling backdrop for a picaresque
> adventure story that becomes a novel of education, which is really a reshaping of
> an old myth. (p. 68)

A more recent example of this tendency to bridge genres is Grand Master Harlan Ellison's Hugo-winning short story, "I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream," which clearly contains elements of horror. Additionally, Grand Master Anne McCaffrey's *Dragonriders of Pern* combines the dragons of fantasy with the science of genetics and the use of artificial intelligence. Additionally, most fans read or have read some fantasy, such as Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*.

Is there a unifying factor among all of these subgenres of fantastic literature? According to Malmgren (1991) there is a phrase that encompasses all the aspects of the genre. He says, "we automatically make certain assumptions about the text, among them that it will not […] represent reality, that it will rather constitute an addition to reality. It is as if written in bold letters across the cover of the text were the words *as if* or *what if*" (p. 8). This attitude was expressed by one fan in the present study, who wrote "[m]y favorite game is what if?" Science fiction makes no attempt to describe what is real; instead, its developers imagine an idea, change or variance and explore its impact. In the introduction to *The Road to Science Fiction*, Gunn (2002) expands upon this idea by telling us that "[t]raditional literature is the literature of continuity, and thus of the past; science fiction is the literature of change, and thus of the present and the future" (p. vi).

At its very heart, science fiction and fantasy expects its readers to be looking for something new and different.

Gunn (1995) further defines the genre by comparing it to the reality portrayed in mainstream literature. He contends that the thought behind science fiction is rooted in a completely different worldview. He argues that mainstream fiction focuses on characterization because, to its authors and readers, relationships and how people feel about reality are the purpose of the writing. On the other hand, science fiction explores humanity's origins and ultimate fate, so plot and setting drive the writing:

> [F]or the mainstream what happens does not really matter; nothing new is going to occur, and the only proper concern is how characters should react to repetition. Science fiction …exists in a world of change, and the focus is on external events: What is the change and how are the humans (or aliens) going to respond to it? (p. 95)

Mendlesohn (2009) reaches a similar conclusion comparing juvenile science fiction and fantasy literature to mainstream young adult [YA] literature. There are, it would seem, paradigmatic differences in the way mainstream thinkers and speculative fiction fans interpret the reality and purpose of the human condition. It may be this variance in worldviews that underlies science fiction fandom as a cultural group.

<center>History Part 1: The Genre</center>

It is not the intention of this paper to provide an in depth study of the history and criticism of science fiction, which are more deeply described elsewhere. For example, to experience the literary history of science fiction, the reader is referred to Grand Master James Gunn's six-volume series, *The Road to Science Fiction* (2002) which spans the

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traditional history of science fiction and also explores the development of British and international science fiction by providing the reader with an anthology of seminal works. For an easily readable history of science fiction the reader will enjoy an additional work by James Gunn, *Alternate Worlds* (1975). In recent years, literary criticism of the genre has become more powerful and respected. Grand Master Brian Aldiss combines history and criticism in his *Billion Year Spree* (1973), which he expanded into *Trillion Year Spree* in 1986 with the help of David Wingrove. For some more contemporary scholarship, there are now several easily accessible journals such as *Extrapolation,* first published in 1959, which claims to be the first academic journal to publish work on science fiction and fantasy (see http://blue.utb.edu/extrapolation/), and *Science Fiction Studies,* published since 1973 through DePauw University, which makes its articles available free online at http://www.depauw.edu/sfs/. Furthermore, the Science Fiction Research Association (see www.sfra.org for more information) provides a forum for scholars to discuss a variety of subjects.

As mentioned earlier, this paper is not focused upon the history of the genre. However a thorough discussion of this culture cannot be made without some discussion of the development of the genre since it gave birth to fans, fandom and conventions. With this in mind, what follows is an abbreviated history of science fiction.

As Kincaid (2003) points out, there is no first book that is science fiction. Choosing that first book would require a stronger claim to a definition of science fiction than has been made to date. Many of the themes of science fiction can be shown to have roots in classical Greek literature. For example, the marvels (and dangers) of technology are described in the myth of Daedulus and his son, Icarus, who engineered wings to

escape their island prison. Another category of the genre is the travel fantasy in which adventurers explore undiscovered countries or worlds. This subgenre is first represented by Lucian of Samosata (165 AD) who writes about a philosopher who goes to the moon to prove the Earth is round. Additionally, the idea of utopic fiction can be found in Plato's *Republic* (c. 400 BC), which describes the ideal government and educational system.

Many of these themes resurfaced during the 16th and 17th centuries. The concept of a utopia was re-introduced (and given its name) by a text written in 1516 by St. Thomas More, who set his main characters on an isolated island to learn from an ideal society. Other authors would continue the idea of the fantastic travel story. Astronomer Johannes Kepler wrote a novel, *Somnium,* which was published posthumously in 1634, about a dream depicting life on the moon. The first such story published in English, *The Man in the Moone,* was written by Bishop Francis Godwin in 1638. The real Cyrano de Bergerac (1619-1655) used his talents as a dramatist to invent science-like methods to transport his characters to places like the moon and the sun. De Bergerac would be an important influence on Jonathan Swift and his novels, especially *Gulliver's Travels,* which because of its social criticism, Kornbluth (1959) calls the "first English science fiction novel" (p. 72). Aldiss (1986) however, while acknowledging the brilliance of Swift, denies that *Gulliver's Travels* is science fiction, since it is "satirical and/or moral in intention rather than speculative" (p. 81). Aldiss further explains that the issue is one of change. These ancestors of science fiction he considered "time-locked—not recognizing change as the yeast of the societies they depict[ed]" (p. 87). For Aldiss and some other critics, these writers from Plato to Swift are not writing science fiction because they are

not really writing about the future; to them, the future-based plots of the story are only commentaries on contemporary times.

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, on the other hand, specifically intended her first novel, *Frankenstein* (1818), to speculate upon the possibilities that science could invoke. Aldiss (1986) claims her work is unique because of her desire to break with the past while dramatizing the differences to be found in the new era. Anticipation of change is what gives the book "some right to be called the first science fiction novel" (Gunn, 1967, p. 45). Scholes and Rabkin (1977) simply call her the founding mother of science fiction. Because *Frankenstein* was also transposed into a play in 1822 and a movie in 1910, it is also arguably the first commercially successful science fiction novel.

Frankenstein, especially the Hollywood version, is only one of the reasons that science fiction is often connected to another fantasy subgenre--horror. Another reason is the work of one of the most famous horror writers in American literature, Edgar Allan Poe[11]. In truth, his works include some of the earliest tales of space travel ("The Unparalleled Adventure of One Hans Pfaall," 1835) and time travel ("A Tale of the Ragged Mountains," 1844). John Douglas (1995), an FBI agent who writes about real life serial killers, tells us that Poe's August Dupin from *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841) "may have been history's first behavioral profiler" (p. 19). Poe not only wrote science fiction, he brilliantly combined it with horror.

Shelley's work, however, was still mostly a gothic novel, while Poe was experimenting with several genres; therefore, many historians credit Jules Verne as the first systematic science fiction novelist (Suvin, 1979). As Gunn (1967) points out:

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[11] Many of Poe's works can be read online at http://www.pambytes.com/poe/poe.html

"Before Verne the marvels of science had on occasion been incidental to stories of romance, but Verne gained a world-wide success for his ability to make technological achievements a subject for fiction" (p. 65). His first science fiction novel, *Five Weeks in a Balloon,* which was originally published in 1863, set a pattern for the rest of his novels. His work would expound heavily on technology and science, but it did not usually introduce much that was new or speculative. Instead, it was Verne's talent for explaining technology while making it exciting that inspired Scholes and Rabkin (1977) to call him "the poet of hardware" (p. 9). The technology Verne described was not extremely advanced even at the time it was written; rather, Verne's work was well researched and introduced plausible advances and consequences in a format intended to be entertaining, not preachy after the fashion of utopian writers of the day. Of his eighty plus works, several remain classics in any literature collection: *A Journey to the Center of the Earth* (1864*), From the Earth to the Moon* (1865), and *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1870) represent Verne's greatest creation, a new genre that would become science fiction.

Where Verne's novels revolved around machinery, his English contemporary Herbert George Wells was writing about the evolution of humanity. After failing as a draper's apprentice, Wells was given the opportunity to teach at a private boys' school, which he did until he won a scholarship to the Normal School of Science in London. Thus, Wells, unlike many of his contemporaries, had a thorough understanding of the science of his time, especially biology, which he had studied under T.H. Huxley. It was Lewis Hind, editor of the *Pall Mall Budget,* who started Wells on the road to science fiction by suggesting that Wells use his "special knowledge of science" (as cited in Gunn,

1967, p. 92) to write short stories, the first of which was "The Stolen Bacillus" (1895). Wells' first time traveling tale, *The Time Machine,* was published by the *National Observer* in 1894. In 1898, Wells wrote what might be his best-known work, *War of the Worlds.*[12] Eventually, Wells would become famous for his novels that described groups of people who used multiple supergadgets to create ideal societies that would be referred to as Wellsian utopias. The effect of Wells' novels would be so strong that Scholes and Rabkin (1977) would claim "his influence on the science fiction tradition in the English-speaking world is so great as to be incalculable" (p.15). Indeed, George Orwell (1946) would credit Wells with the way the modern world thinks:

> Thinking people who were born about the beginning of this century are in some sense Wells' own creation. How much influence any mere writer has, and especially a "popular" writer whose work takes effect quickly, is questionable, but I doubt whether anyone who was writing books between 1900 and 1950, at any rate in the English language, influenced the young so much. The minds of all of us, and therefore the physical world, would be perceptibly different if Wells never existed. (p. 121)

Few science fiction authors have been as prolific or influential as Wells. But it should be noted that he had one other important impact on the genre. He proved that its creators and their works could be economically viable, providing the incentive for others to try their hand at the new genre.

Verne and Wells helped give European science fiction a distinctive flavor, since they were writers actively involved in the intellectual and artistic lives of their society.

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[12] Steven Spielberg (2005) brought Wells' work back into the view of the general public with the release of his version of the movie.

Although they "knew that they were taking new fictional departures, they had no set name for what they were doing and did not think of it as any more or less literary than the work of other men and women of letters" (Scholes & Rabkin, 1977, p.35). These men still saw themselves as part of the mainstream. It would seem that it was not until Americans became heavily involved in science fiction that the genre began to be seen as separate from literature.

There are three factors that contribute to this sense of American-ness: history, talented people, and art. First, at the turn of the twentieth century, Americans were full of optimism because industry, invention and the size and influence of the nation were growing at exponential rates. Further, the United States had not suffered many of the devastations of World War I. While much of Europe was financially and physically exhausted, the United States had found the time to think, write, invent and explore. This kind of environment, especially amidst the Industrial Revolution, bred an interest in science fiction as people wondered about a future dominated by machines.

The second factor was visionary American publishers such as Frank Munsey, who in 1896 developed the first pulp magazine, *Golden Argosy*. Pulp paper was cheap; it yellowed quickly and tore easily, but an entire magazine of over 100 pages could be produced and then sold for a dime. These magazines appealed to newly literate Americans who apparently had no patience for sitting through long and esoteric novels. Instead, Americans were introduced to authors such as H. Rider Haggard when his novel *Ayesha* was serialized in the pulp *Popular Magazine* in 1904.

Finally, as the United States began to create a new self-image, it began to create its own art forms. As Bruce Sterling (1999) so beautifully states it,

Science fiction is a native 20th century art form that came of age at the same time as jazz. Like jazz, science fiction is very street level, very American, rather sleazy, rather popular, with a long and somewhat recondite tradition. It's also almost impossible to avoid, no matter how hard you try. (para. 1)

Science fiction came of age at the same time as many American art forms; thus, in a new era the new literary form was associated with new American ideas.

The plethora of magazines introduced in the first decade of the twentieth century required that publishers create a readership. *Popular Magazine* (1903-1931) encouraged reader involvement by including a letters to the editor section almost from its beginnings. Another magazine, *Cavalier* (1908-1914), maintained the circulation of its weekly periodical by organizing its readers in a new club, the Cavalier Legion, members of which could be recognized by the green button with a red star on their lapel. With this many magazines to feed the hunger of a new reading demographic, publishers spent much of their time recruiting new authors. In August 1911, the managing editor of *All Story* (1905-1920), Thomas Metcalf, received an unfinished novel, *Dejah Thoris: Martian Princess*. This 65,000-word serial would be the first of many books written by Edgar Rice Burroughs, under the pseudonym Normal Bean, about the fictional planet Barsoom.

With an interest in science fiction established and cheap media to spread it, the seeds were planted for the creation of a specialized magazine for a speculative genre. The first such publication, *The Thrill Book,* was introduced in 1919. Lasting only 16 issues, it was dedicated to non-mainstream stories but did not appeal to the science and technology

minded. *Weird Tales,* introduced in 1923[13], became the first fantasy-only magazine. Over time it would introduce the concept of science fantasy, beginning the blurring of the definition of science fiction as a genre. It would be, however, another three years until a dedicated science fiction magazine would be published.

The visionary publisher who created this magazine, Hugo Gernsback, is called by many authors and fans the father of science fiction. Perhaps one of the greatest science fiction writers of all time, Grand Master Isaac Asimov, says of him

> Even now, when I know the long and respectable history of science fiction, I can't accept it with my heart, I cannot shake the worship felt by a 9-year old I once knew long ago. To me, deep in my soul, science fiction began in April 1926, and its father was Hugo Gernsback. (Asimov, 1975, p. 11).

On April 5, 1926, Gernsback released the first science fiction magazine, *Amazing Stories*. The new pulp specialized in what Gernsback called scientifiction. Its flashy covers and title were designed to appeal to the mass market. Gernsback's own stated goal was to educate as well as to entertain. In his first editorial in *Amazing* in April, 1926, he wrote, "Not only do these amazing tales make tremendously interesting reading—they are also instructive. They supply knowledge that we might not otherwise obtain—and they supply it in a very palatable form" (as cited in Gunn, 1967, p. 120). Through *Amazing Stories* Gernsback gave science fiction fans what they wanted: adventure, science and a way to meet each other. Through his magazine, Gernsback created not only readers but also fans.

Gernsback introduced his magazine by publishing reprints of hard-to-find works by famous authors such as Verne and Wells. However by the third year of *Amazing's* publication, Gernsback was routinely introducing new authors including E.E. (Doc)

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[13] Unlike many of the pulps, *Weird Tales* survived into the 21st century, finally ceasing publication in 2007.

Smith and Jack Williamson. The publishing empire that Gernsback built around *Amazing Stories* declared bankruptcy in February 1929, but Gernsback was back in business with *Science Wonder Stories* by June of that same year. In his first editorial of that magazine, Gernsback used the term 'science fiction,' which is still the most commonly used term when referring to speculative fiction.

It should be noted here that the adulation of Gernsback is not unanimous. According to Suvin (1979), Gernsback may have popularized science fiction, but only at "the cost of starving, stunting, and deforming it" (p. 23). Further, Grand Master Brian Aldiss accuses Gernsback of isolating science fiction from the mainstream and encouraging a market for lowbrow literature, which Suvin refers to as paraliterature. In *Trillion Year Spree* (1986), Aldiss repeats and expands his contention, made earlier in *Billion Year Spree (1973),* that Gernsback contributed to the isolation of science fiction:

> Gernsback's segregation of what he liked to call "scientifiction" into magazines designed to contain nothing else, ghetto-fashion, guaranteed the setting up of various narrow orthodoxies inimical to any thriving literature. A cultural chauvinism prevailed, with unfortunate consequences of which the field has yet to rid itself. Gernsback, as editor, showed himself to be without literary understanding. The dangerous precedents he set were to be followed by many later editors in the field. (p. 202)

Aldiss may be correct when he claims that Gernsback contributed to science fiction's isolation from the mainstream, but for many fans this does not matter. As Gunn (1967) asserts "[b]efore Gernsback, there were science fiction stories. After Gernsback, there was a science fiction genre" (p. 128). Gernsback, for good or ill, was the conduit that

helped turn science fiction into a genre and form a community which remembers him each year with a series of awards—simply called the Hugos—presented at WorldCon to the genre's best and brightest creators.[14]

In January 1930, a third major magazine was introduced to the public, *Astounding Stories of Super Science.* One of the major writers for this magazine was a physicist, John W. Campbell. He would not, however, be remembered as an author. Instead, he is honored as "the greatest editor the SF field has known" (Aldiss, 1986, p. 161) because of his leadership at *Astounding* for almost 35 years (1937-1971). Gunn (1967) calls the decade between 1938 and 1950 the Astounding years because it is during "these years the first major science fiction editor began developing the first modern science fiction magazine, the first modern science fiction writers, and indeed, modern science fiction itself" (p. 148). While Gernsback maintained the excitement of the pulps, Campbell discovered and developed authors such as Asimov, Heinlein, Sturgeon and Van Vogt, who would add a new dimension of logic and intellectual rigor to the genre. In 1960, Campbell changed the magazine's name to *Analog,* under which title it still circulates today. Although the golden age of science fiction had passed by then, Campbell's leadership helped nurture another generation of science fiction authors, introducing Anne McCaffrey's *Pern* series in 1967, and developing the careers of such authors as Harry Harrison, Frank Herbert and Robert Silverberg. Members of WorldCon award the John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer annually during the convention.[15]

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[14] See *Locus* magazine's list and information about the awards for more information
http://www.locusmag.com/SFAwards/Db/Hugo.html.
[15] See http://www.writertopia.com/awards/winners/campbell for a list of award winners and more
information about the award.

The 1960s led to a new chapter in science fiction history, a movement known as New Wave. At its core was the editor of the British science fiction magazine *New Worlds,* Michael Moorcock (named a grand master in 2008), who took control of the periodical in 1964. Followers of this movement sought to blur the lines between mainstream and speculative fiction by adopting innovative literary styles while embracing new, often radical, social themes. The voices of these authors tended to the satirical or were imitative of either classic science fiction or mainstream authors. For example, in *Barefoot in the Head*, Brian Aldiss attempted to use a voice similar to that of James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake,* while Harry Harrison's *Bill the Galactic Hero* parodied the classic golden age novels *Starship Troopers* (Heinlein) and *Caves of Steel* (Asimov).

Since the 1960s, scholars have been reluctant to name trends in science fiction; this is perhaps because many branches of the genre go beyond the traditional book, the most obvious one being film. Science fiction and the movies have gone together since the beginnings of that medium. As Clute and Nicholls (1993) point out,

> From the outset, the cinema specialized in illusion to a degree that had been impossible on stage. Sf itself takes as its subject matter that which does not exist […] so it has a natural affinity with the cinema: illusory qualities of film are ideal for presenting fictions about things that are not yet real. […] [S]f, no matter how sophisticated, by definition must feature something new, some alteration from the world as we know it […] Film, from this viewpoint, is sf's ideal medium. (p. 219)

Conventions, recognizing this connection, often reserve a space for a film room so that fans can catch movies they have missed, view films that did not reach wide release, or

simply enjoy classic favorites. It is therefore appropriate to use the next few pages to provide a brief history of science fiction in film.

One of the earliest science fiction movies, Georges Melies' *A Trip to the Moon* (1902), was filmed using trick photography. Several classics of cinema and science fiction were produced in the 1920s and 30s, including Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927), and the classic movies *Frankenstein* (1931) and *The Invisible Man* (1933) by James Whale. The movies of the 1950s are still remembered fondly by many fans; but the films are also appreciated by a younger generation that has made some of them cult classics. This is the era of the much maligned monster movie--*The Thing from Another World* (Nyby, 1951)*, Godzilla* (Honda, 1954); and *Them* (Douglas, 1955)--when fans screeched at the sight of aliens, prehistoric creatures and mutants. The 1960s were mostly limited to low budget films; however, two strong movies which would begin to change some attitudes about science fiction would be produced in 1968: Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (which received the Hugo for Best Dramatic Presentation) won an Oscar for Best Visual Effects) and Franklin Schaffner's *Planet of the Apes* was nominated for two Oscars as well.

1977 was another very good year for science fiction films, producing two films that deserve to be remembered. These films proved the commercial viability of high quality science fiction and so began an era of big-budget genre blockbusters. The Hugo-winning *Star Wars* (1977) took fandom by storm. With this film, George Lucas created a universe that would rival that of *Star Trek.* Although more space opera than space fiction, it has impressed several generations of fans, as evidenced by the fact that there may be as many people dressed as Jedi warriors as Starfleet officers at conventions. Perhaps less

popular with fans but more successful with the mainstream was Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* which earned nine Oscar nominations. The success of these films inspired Hollywood to spend more money on science fiction. Spielberg had two more science fiction blockbusters, first in 1982 with *ET: The Extra Terrestrial* and then in 1993 with *Jurassic Park.* In the meantime, George Lucas released two more Star Wars films: *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980) and *The Return of the Jedi* (1983), during the 1980s. These are also the years of the return of *Star Trek*, albeit this time to the big screen.

Since the early 1980s, science fiction has made regular returns to the Academy Awards. Films such as *Alien* (Scott, 1979)*, Avatar* (Cameron, 2009) and *Inception* (Nolan, 2010) and several films by Peter Jackson, including the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy (2001)*, King Kong* (2005)*,* and *District 9* (2009)*,* have been popular not only with fans but in the mainstream as well. Of course, a movie does not have to be a blockbuster to be good science fiction. Several other good films have also been released in the last three decades including *Gattaca* (Niccol, 1997)*, Sunshine* (Boyle, 2007)*,* and *Edward Scissorhands* (Burton, 1990)*.* Unfortunately, the era has also seen some multibillion-dollar not-so-good movies as well, including the first three episodes of *Star Wars* and half of the *Star Trek* movies.

One of the inspirations for science fiction movies has been comic books and graphic novels. Comics, which McCloud (1993) dates back to the pre-Columbian era, are "[j]uxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer" (p. 9). Interestingly, he then spends several pages (or frames since his book is written in a comics format)

explaining the importance of the space between the images. Although comics may be centuries old, the relationship between science fiction and comic books is only a little more than a century old. *Our Office Boy's Fairy Tales*, which takes place on Mars, was published in 1895 (Clute & Nicholls, 1993). The first adult science fiction comic strip was *Buck Rogers in the 25th century,* which ran from 1929-1967. The popularity of comic strips inspired Hugo Gernsback to publish *Superworld Comics* in 1939. As comics continued to grow in popularity, so did the caliber of artists and authors who created them. For example, Grand Master Jack Williamson scripted comics based on his novels *Seetee Shock* and *Seetee Ship,* while Grand Master Alfred Bester contributed to the script for *Superman.* While many in the mainstream might consider much of the superhero mythology to be fantasy, it should be noted that comics such as *Iron Man* portray normal humans who have used modern technology to help them defend the average person.

Graphic novels are a type of comic that are, in general, self-contained and are usually not intended to appear in more than one volume. Clute & Nicholls (1993) contend that these novels

represented an opportunity for ambitious comic-book artists and writers to begin to test the boundaries of the medium, to demonstrate the organized complexity possible in the interplay between the conventions of written narrative and visual storytelling. The best graphic novels are more than the sum of their parts; they are visions of the world which cannot be paraphrased into any other medium. (p. 516).

McCloud would probably agree with this statement. He believes that "comics can match any of the art forms it draws so much of its strength from [...]. When pictures carry the

weight of clarity in a scene, they free words to explore a wider area […]. On the other hand, if the words lock in the "meaning" of a sequence, then the pictures can really take off […]." (pp. 156-159). Supporters of comics believe that this medium is not just good use of words or pictures, but at its best comics[16] is its own form of communication with a unique way of transmitting ideas.

It would seem that in popular culture comics has value. Comic-Con, the largest comic convention in the Americas and the fourth largest in the world fills, the San Diego Convention Center every year (with an estimated 125,000 people). Similar in pattern to science fiction conventions, it includes panels, guest speakers, gaming, films, artists and dealers, many of which are also well known in the science fiction community.

Television has also become a popular source of science fiction. Gone are the days of only one or two science fiction shows available to hungry fans. In 1992, The Science Fiction Channel first aired on cable television. Now known simply as Syfy, it re-broadcasts classic television and movies, produces several made-for-television movies, and has created several popular television shows. *Battlestar Galactica* (Larson & Moore, 2004-2009)*,* for example, has received much critical acclaim. Science fiction, however, is no longer relegated to a cable television channel. ABC ran *LOST* (Lieber, Abrams, Lindelof, 2004-2010) for six seasons while NBC aired Kring's *Heroes* (2006-2010) for four seasons. In 2003, the Hugo Awards divided the Dramatic Presentation category into a long form (over 90 minutes) and a short form (under 90 minutes without commercials). Since the institution of the short form category over half of the awards have been

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[16] According McCloud, comics is "plural in form, used with a singular verb" (p. 9). I am also using his example and using a singular pronoun if one is needed.

presented to episodes for popular television shows[17]. Today, as with other genres and the mainstream, there is choice of shows whose quality ranges widely, but that are aired based on their commercial success.

Another facet of the genre can be found in the computer and video game industry. Although for many of these games, science fiction settings are merely an attractive background to appeal to consumers, the best games also include strong story lines. For example, *Resident Evil*, a game published by Capcom in 1996, required that players fight a supercomputer and flesh eating monsters created by a laboratory accident. Over the last decade, it has developed a strong story based on a mega franchise, which includes 5 different games, 5 feature films, several comic books, and 7 novels.

The obvious popularity of non-textual science fiction has resulted in the rise of conventions dedicated to media aspects of the genre. The biggest example of this type of convention is DragonCon, "the largest multi-media, popular culture convention focusing on science fiction and fantasy, gaming, comics, literature, art, music, and film in the universe." (Dragon*Con, 2011) Dragon*Con is held annually in Atlanta on Labor Day, attracting thousands of fans.

It is apparent from the genre's history that fans have strong visual literacy skills as well as being voracious consumers of print. As will be seen in the history of fandom that follows, fans are also fluent writers and users of technology.

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[17] Television series with episodes that have been recognized by the Hugos include *Dr. Who*, *Battlestar Galatica*, and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

History Part 2: Community Members and Their Gatherings

Defining Fans and Fandom

It would be appropriate here to provide a more thorough definition of "fandom"; unfortunately, like science fiction, the meaning of the term is fluid. A stereotypical definition--that fan is simply a shortened form of fanatic and fandom is a group of fanatics--oversimplifies the nature of those who describe themselves as fans. A definition from Main Street might be found in the opening of Hills' (2002) book, "[e]verybody knows what a 'fan' is. It's somebody who is obsessed with a particular star, celebrity, film, TV programme, band; somebody who can quote their favoured lines or lyrics, chapter and verse" (p. ix). However, Hills expands that definition, adding that "[f]ans are often highly articulate. Fans interpret media texts in a variety of interesting and perhaps unexpected ways. And fans participate in communal activities—they are not 'socially atomised' or isolated viewers/readers" (p. ix).

It was, according to Katz (n.d.), a respected fanzine writer, the need to interact and discuss that turned fans into fandom: "Interest in the core subject is what pulls fan-types out of the anonymous audience and into an interactive circle. Those who wanted to be more than readers couldn't do much while books remained the main delivery vehicle for science fiction. It's hard to interact with a book […]" (p. 4). Rather, fans interacted through the letter columns of genre periodicals. Then they got each others' addresses from the columns and began to meet in person. These groups of people eventually led to the creation of a subculture.

Clute and Nicholls (1993) are more specific in their definition when they write:

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Fandom is … a collection of people with a common background in sf and a

common interest in communication, whether through discussion, chatter,

correspondence or fanzine publishing. The result is more nearly a group of

friends, or even a subculture, than a simple fan club or literary society. (p. 403).

Science fiction fans are neither isolated misfits nor just a bunch of friends. Rather,

through a group of semi-organized communal activities, this group of people with similar

interests becomes fandom, an entity that exists because of, but also apart from, science

fiction.

Finding Fan History

That fandom has a history will be made apparent in the brief description that

follows. Fan history has not yet been well organized. Records and memories have mostly

been recorded in fanzines, semiprozines, prozines and convention publications that were

often printed on cheap paper that deteriorated quickly. Further, these artifacts are usually

disposed of quickly, and little attempt has been made to catalog them.

The history of fandom on the American east coast appears to be the best

documented, although there is no reason why this must be so. While it is true that some

of the east coast clubs are among the oldest, a group from Los Angeles has also been in

existence since the 1930s. Again, although east coast clubs have yielded some of science

fiction's most successful creators (Hal Clement started out in the Boston's Strangers

Club, and from New York there were Isaac Asimov, Frederick Pohl, and C.M.

Kornblum), other regions of the US were equally fertile; Robert A. Heinlein came from

the Midwest and Jerry Pournelle, Larry Niven and Ray Bradbury were fostered by the

Los Angeles Science Fiction Society (LASFS).

I suggest that there are several possible reasons why actual books have been written only about east coast science fiction fandom. First, the earliest attempts at conventions were made in the northeast, since higher population densities and shorter distances between major cities made meeting easier. Next, eastern clubs were closer to publishers, so they may have better attracted the notice of those who had a strong influence in the fledgling science fiction community. Alternatively, since eastern clubs and their members were so contentious, perhaps they make for more interesting reading to some people. Finally, it could simply be that two easterners wrote the details of their club histories first. In *The Immortal Storm*, Sam Moskowitz (1988) described the events leading to the first WorldCon in New York City, an event from which he banned several Futurians, a rival New York club. Damon Knight details that club's history in his own book, *The Futurians* (1977). Both men have won Hugo awards for their influence and contributions to the science fiction community.

The histories of sci-fi fandom that do exist are either difficult to find, not well documented, or both. Most of the best-known early histories made little attempt to satisfy a scholarly audience. Indeed, Harry Warner Jr., who wrote two volumes describing fandom in the 1940s and 1950s [*All Our Yesterdays* (1969) and *A Wealth of Fable* (1976)] freely admits he "renounced the entire scholarly apparatus" (1969, p. xv) both for ease of reading and because most of his sources were from fanzines and meeting minutes that could only be found in private collections. Fortunately, in recent decades, some organizations and libraries have begun the monumental task of collecting and archiving these artifacts. For example, the Eaton Collection at the University of California at Riverside claims to "have the largest publicly-accessible collection of science fiction,

fantasy, horror and utopian fiction in the world. It consists of hardback and paperback books, pulp magazines, fanzines, film and visual material, comic books, and ephemera" (Eaton Collection, 2009). Other collections are housed at the University of Kansas library in Lawrence, Kansas and the Science Fiction Museum in Seattle, Washington. Additionally, modern technology may make fan history easier to gather. For example, under the chairmanship of Joe Siclari and Jack Weaver, the FANAC Fan History Project, a website "devoted to the preservation and distribution of information about science fiction and science fiction fandom", has archived dozens of artifacts and "thousands of pages" about fannish history (Siclari & Weaver, 2011).

<div align="center">*A Brief History of Fandom*</div>

As previously implied, from the earliest inception of the genre, science fiction readers have been writers. It is generally agreed that fans first met through the letter column of *Amazing Stories* under the leadership of Gernsback (Coppa, 2006; Clute & Nicholls, 1993). Because it was so hard to reply individually to letters, fans began to communicate through fanzines, nonprofessional publications written by fans to share information and to entertain each other. The first of these was *The Comet,* which was published in 1930 by Raymond A. Palmer for the Science Correspondence Club; it contained mostly articles about science. The first fanzine devoted to science fiction or fantasy was *The Time Traveler,* which was first issued in 1932 by Julius Schwartz and Mort Weisinger. (Clute & Nicholls, p. 414). How many of these fan mags, as they were originally called, were there? According to Frederick Pohl (1974),

> they existed in uncountable numbers. Uncountable because no one ever knew, from one day to the next, how many of them there were. Some fan or club would

stir itself into activity and borrow a mimeograph machine, and they would put out

one issue, or twenty, as long as momentum held out (p. 23).

Why did they do this? Because the fans needed something to read, Pohl states they wrote

these fanzines while they were waiting for the arrival of the monthly issues of their

prozines (professional magazines) such as *Amazing, Analog,* and *Wonder* to come out. In

general, these fanzines (fan publications) were circulated free of charge or at a nominal

cost to defray expenses such as postage and duplication.

The coining of the term "fanzine" itself is credited to Russ Chauvenet, (Clute &

Nicholls, 1993) an international chess champion, who as a member of Boston's The

Stranger Club created the term in 1941 to describe the group's newsletter. Chauvenet is

also said to have developed the term "prozine" to describe professionally published,

usually for profit speculative fiction periodicals. Science fiction fans annually recognize

the best fanzine and semiprozine of each year with a Hugo Award. These 'zines may be

the best source of fannish history as they tend to be a combination of amateur literature,

gossip about famous fans, and reports about events of fannish interest. Although many of

these publications are difficult to find, the task is becoming easier since libraries are

beginning to build collections that are available to interested scholars, and because

semiprozines like *LOCUS* have gone online.

Fans soon noticed they did not have to limit themselves to written

communication. Those who discovered they lived close to other fans started to organize

themselves into small groups. In 1934, Gernsback announced the formation of the

Science Fiction League, complete with lapel pins, insignia, and stationary. Clubs were

chartered in many of the major cities of the United States including New York, Boston,

Philadelphia and Los Angeles. In these large cities, there were enough people to ensure that at least a few dozen people who enjoyed science fiction could be found. Knight (1977) describes the sense of the era:

> Picture these science fiction fans at eighteen or nineteen—gawky, pimpled, excruciatingly self-conscious—seeking each other because they have to have somebody to talk to: organizing themselves by mail into the Science Correspondence Club, the International Scientific Association, the Edison Science Correspondence Club, the International Cosmos Science Club. Up late at night, every night, writing ten-page single spaced stilted wonderful letters to each other about the Secrets of the Universe and the World of Tomorrow! Some of them are lucky enough to find a science fiction club where they can actually meet in person (p. 3).

Unfortunately, just finding each other was not enough to create stable groups. As mentioned earlier, there was often disagreement among science fiction fans. On the east coast (and probably in other parts of the country), there were two different kinds of fans. The issue between the two sides is well summarized by Katz (n.d.). On one side were the Gernsbackian science fans who were actively trying to recreate the science described in the novels. These people read the books and magazines for the science they contained. These fans were (or are) often active members of amateur rocketry clubs and the like. This type of fan still exists, and panels discussing real science, such as space exploration, are still popular. However, many fans fall, instead, into what Katz calls the communicationist camp, the people who preferred the stories and the discussions of them.

It should not be assumed, however, that the science was completely removed from their text. Rather, this camp

> no longer thought of personally achieving the scientific breakthroughs the stories predicted. Instead, they functioned as critics, debating the consequences and impact of various scientific and social trends. In short, communicationists took discussions out of the laboratory and into the living room. These were, theoretically, intelligent laymen, not junior scientists. They read, thought and published their analyses, but they didn't fiddle with test tubes and bottle rockets much. (p. 5)

At conventions, these fans debate the impact of science and new ideas, including genetic engineering or interpretations of civil rights, during panels.

Possibly the earliest fan history that attempted to describe these tempestuous times was written by Jack Speer, who lists some of the events of the 1930s in a brochure called "Up to Now." It has been described as someone having "gathered up all the hates, prejudices, and petty jealousies that have clogged the pipes of the stream of life since the world first began" (Warner, 1969, p 53). Fans argued over what material was appropriate for fanzines and the behavior of members of meetings. The most detailed description of this period, Sam Moskowitz's *The Immortal Storm* (which was originally published in the 1950s) is, according to Warner, another description of the "picayune squabbles between two camps of teenagers" (p. 54). Despite the book's obvious bias, it does provide a glance into the creation of what is now considered to be the first WorldCon. To balance out the story, interested readers should also examine Damon Knight's *The Futurians.*

The first science fiction convention occurred in 1936 when a small group of New

York fans traveled to Philadelphia to visit a group of like-minded readers. This historic meeting was held in the home of one of the Philadelphians. The first world convention was held at Caravan Hall in Manhattan in 1939. It was timed to coincide with the World's Fair being held in New York that year. Although that gathering was certainly not representative of the world, it did have almost 200 people in attendance. More importantly, it was considered successful enough to inspire people to plan two more conventions: one in Chicago in 1940 and another in Denver in 1941. The entrance of the US into WW II caused a hiatus in the conventions, so the next one was held in Los Angeles in 1946. There has been a WorldCon every year since that time[18].

Fan history in the 1940s is not remarkable. During the first half of the decade, many clubs lost the majority of their members when individuals took jobs in new locations or entered military service. Communication was further limited when the shortage of printing supplies (such as paper and ink) prevented the duplication of fanzines or when censorship prevented the mailing of anything that commented on the war or speculated about the future after the war. Warner's *All Our Yesterdays* (1969) gives short histories and profiles some BNFs (Big Name Fans), important (or interesting) fanzines, and larger clubs during this decade.

The 1960s provided, perhaps, the most powerful change in fandom: television, which gave birth to a new community, media fandom. There is some evidence that the first media fandom was a community created based on *The Man from U.N.C.L.E* (1964 to 1968), which was watched religiously by millions. During its run, another science fiction vehicle was aired; *Star Trek*'s first episode was shown in 1966. Unlike *U.N.C.L.E. Star Trek* struggled for ratings during its first television life. This, says Clute and Nicholls

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[18] See Appendix O for a list of WorldCons by year and location.

(1993), is far more typical of science fiction television, which rarely made it into the big budget top-20 shows, probably because much of TV science fiction was aimed at children, while being pressured into conformity and away from controversy.

Coppa (2006) suggests that the show's very unpopularity served as a means of making the fans more cohesive and vocal. At any rate, these fans fought hard for their *Star Trek.* When NBC threatened to cancel the show after the second season, Bjo Trimble, an active LASFS member, led an unprecedented letter writing campaign that kept the show on the air for another season. Although it was not the first media fandom group, *Trek* fandom certainly became one of the most influential. Over the last five decades, *Star Trek* has maintained a consistent presence in the media, spawning four spin-off television series[19], eight movies, and a Saturday-morning cartoon show. Sadly, *Star Trek: The Original Series* (as the first one became known) was not as popular with more traditional fans, who saw it as an outlet for non-readers. This perceived picture of *Trek* fans, who were mostly women, cannot be supported by the facts, since these fans produced fanzines and fan fiction of their own. Eventually, feeling unwelcome, *Trek* fans developed and attended their own conventions, the first of which was held in 1972.

Despite the disdain of more traditional fandom, television science fiction continued to grow, nourished by the infusion of several popular British programs. PBS introduced both *Doctor Who* (BBC, 1963-1989 and 2005-present) and *The Hitchhike's Guide to the Galaxy* (1981) to the United States in 1980; both shows became widely popular with fans, who generated media-based conventions around these shows. The next decade saw the development of a popular series from the United States: J. Michael Straczynski's *Babylon 5* which ran its planned five seasons and spawned dozens of

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[19] *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, *Deep Space Nine, Voyager,* and *Enterprise*

conventions. More recently, Joss Whedon's *Firefly* (2002) has developed a large fan base including an international fan club, the BrownCoats, despite airing only one season.

All of these forms of fandom are represented through a new medium as well: the Internet. Fans writing to and for each other began, as explained earlier, in the 1930s. According to Coppa, the first use of the Internet for this purpose was made by the fans of *Forever Knight* who, in 1992, created the first online email list to distribute its fan fiction. Internet fan fiction began to grow in the 1990s with such technological tools as ListServ and UseNet. These resources tended to be limited to one fan activity or canonical source, such as an author or television show. Over time the development of the blogosphere has allowed fans to expand their interest and writings across the genre. Resources such as *LiveJournal* allow for a large public audience without concern for revealing one's private identity. According to Hellekson and Busse (2006), the advent of Internet fandom has changed even the demographics of fandom, allowing for the inclusion of "ever younger fans who previously would not have had access to the fannish culture except through their parents [who] can now enter the fan space effortlessly" (p.13). Without the cost of physical reproduction and postage, the Internet has provided fans of all ages and demographics with tools and texts that reach wider audiences than the amateur publishers of the 1950s and 1960s could have ever hoped for. Today, physical boundaries, materials costs and time zones are no longer as relevant as they once were to fandom.

In addition to mailing lists, tech savvy fans developed archiving software so that their stories could be found. These individual archives have been subsumed into larger databases such as *FanFiction,* which encourages readers to surf into similar story lines. As is typical with fans, they did not limit their reading or writing to within one storyline.

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Crossover stories in which characters from one universe or storyline are carried over to another have existed for decades. Both traditional authors and television have used the idea. For example, Heinlein mined his earlier stories to create new ones such as *Number of the Beast,* in which he also included characters from the *Oz* books and settings from the *Barsoom* stories. Further, Alan Dean Foster's *Spellsinger* series features a character transported to a mythical land from the United States, who sings modern rock songs to perform magic. In television, *Star Trek* borrowed directly from Greek mythology (for a second season episode entitled "Who Mourns for Adonais?") and American history (for an episode in the third season called "Spectre of the Gun") to create storylines. Fans writing fan fiction adopted this idea early on, creating stories that mixed their favorite characters in a variety of plot lines. Fan fiction writers have actively developed this crossover idea. For example, there is an entire website (CJ, 2010) dedicated to *Stargate* and *NCIS* crossovers, a pairing of science fiction shows set in contemporary America.

The increase in media science fiction has resulted in new sources of relationships and new types of communities and fandom. These new communities and the passage of time have changed fandom's attitudes towards non-traditional text. Although most conventions still have a focal point, other groups are now welcome to share interests, ideas and learning. For example, at a recent Doctor Who convention, my husband and I saw fans wearing items representing *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997)*, Halo* (2001)*, Firefly* (2002) and *Star Trek* (1966). In addition, there was a fan table marketing memberships to a local steampunk convention. While I would in no way wish to imply that factionism among fans no longer exists, fandom appears to have mended some of the rifts so that its members can live and learn together again.

Fandom as an Affinity Group

Despite the political infighting and philosophical differences that arose during the science fiction community's early years, the attraction of individual fans to the genre kept them interacting with each other. Although fans argued about the types and purposes of science fiction, they had a common goal: to see more of the genre in print and to see more people reading it. These common interactions and goals make science fiction fandom an affinity group, a term that avoids "the romantic notions that seem to accompany the word 'community'; affinity groups can be good, evil or anything in between" (p. Gee, 2009, p. 192). James Gee (2003) tells us that affinity groups are "bonded primarily through shared endeavors, goals and practices and not shared race, gender, nation, ethnicity, or culture" (p. 197). Gee identifies six features of an affinity group:

1. Members of an affinity group bond to each other primarily through a common endeavor and only secondarily through affective ties, which are, in turn leveraged to further the common endeavor […].

2. The common endeavor is organized around a whole process […] not single, discrete, or decontextualized tasks […].

3. Members … have extensive knowledge, … members must be involved with many or all stages of the endeavor; able to carry out multiple, partly overlapping functions, and able to reflect on the endeavor as a whole system, not just their part of it […].

4. Members each have intensive—deep and specialist knowledge in one or more

   areas. Members may well bring special intensive knowledge gained from their

   outside experiences and various sociocultural affiliations […].

5. Much of the knowledge […] [is] distributed (spread across various members,

   […] and their tools and technologies […]) and dispersed ([…] networked

   across different sites […]).

6. The role of leaders […] is to *design* the groups, to continually *resource* them,

   and to help members turn their tacit knowledge into *explicit knowledge* […]

   (pp. 192-193)

As we shall see later in this research, fandom exhibits most, if not all, of these

characteristics. For example, members tend to have a broad knowledge base about many

aspects of the genre while demonstrating a passion for, and a deep knowledge, of one or

two specific interests of the community.

Fandom, however, is more than just a learning community; it is also at the very

least a sub-culture. It has a history and artifacts of that history. Its members have

specialized knowledge of their genre. Science fiction is text; however, it is also art in the

form of music and painting. Fans use a specialized language to discuss both the subject of

their interest, the community and life within that community. Additionally, the group

creates its own environment through setting and clothing. Science fiction fandom is not

just a group of people who like something a lot; it is a group of people who have turned

that something into a functioning entity that supports its members and unites them.

History Part 3: A typical community

The Los Angeles Science Fiction Society claims to be the "world's oldest continuously-active science-fiction and fantasy club" (Los Angeles Science Fiction Society, n.d). The initial group was chartered as the fourth official branch of the Science Fiction League on October 27, 1934. In 1939, the club, under the leadership of one of fandom's foremost members, Forrest Ackerman, separated from the League. On March 27, 1940, the group adopted the name by which it is now known: the Los Angeles Science Fiction Society. Despite internal dissension and the impact of World War II, the club has managed to meet every Thursday since its founding (although one formal meeting had an attendance of only two: Ackerman and F.T. Laney).

Activities for the club were typical of such organizations. For example, there were formal discussions of science related issues and the science fiction genre. As was also typical of the time, one source of contention was whether or not topics not related to science and science fiction should be acceptable at meetings. Another club activity was the publication of the official club organ or fanzine, originally called *Imagination!* The production of a fanzine, which required gatherings such as mailing parties outside of normal meeting times, inspired other fannish activities such as beach and Christmas parties (Warner, 1969).

Probably the first semi-convention held by this organization was a series of "fanquets" founded by Walter Daugherty, the first of which was held in February 1944. The first large club-sponsored event was the West Coast Scientifi-Fanatasy Convention held on September 5, 1948. The second one re-united several inactive fans and former members of LASFS who had joined splinter organizations. This convention became an

annual event, now known as Westercon, which is held over the Independence Day weekend somewhere in the western United States. (States that have hosted the event include Arizona, Nevada, California, Oregon, Washington and Hawaii).

LASFS started another series of conventions in 1975, the first of which was called LA 2000 in honor of the club's 2000th meeting. It was so successful that the club decided to hold another one the next year when it was renamed LosCon. The convention's current date, Thanksgiving weekend, was decided upon in 1982. LosCon, which is open to the public, regularly draws over 1,000 attendees. The 2009 convention, according to *Infozine #7,* had 1,162 memberships with 1,031 persons actually attending.

It is this convention that was the site of this study. There are two reasons for this choice. First, the enduring nature of this group provides evidence of the existence of fan history and culture. Additionally, this organization has parented many important fan groups and activities and been a starting pointing for many professionals including Jerry Pournelle and Ray Bradbury.

<div align="center">On Fan Language</div>

Although fandom does not truly have its own language, it does have a broad vocabulary understood especially by fans. The most recent attempt to write a dictionary seems to have been made by Prucher in 2007. Additionally, Clute and Nicholls (1993) define several terms in their encyclopedia. An online dictionary compiled by rich brown is available through FANAC. Although these terms will be recognized by veteran fans, they are routinely exchanged and intermingled with mainstream language. For example, a fan may tell you that he gafiated ("getting away from it all") for a few years, or he may say that he had to take time off from fannish activities due to real world concerns.

Conventions themselves have their own language. First of all, convention is almost always shortened to "*con*." Another common abbreviation is *GoH*, which may be seen at many events. A *GoH* is a Guest of Honor. This person is often a featured speaker at the convention. There may be different types of GoH at a convention, such as the Artist GoH or the Fan GoH. People who work on the main convention committee are members of the *ConCom*, which is headed by the *ConChair*. At LosCon, sub-committee chairs may also have special titles. For example, the person who coordinates the room parties is called the Party Maven.

Additionally, some fannish language has been adopted by the mainstream. For example, the term "robot" was developed by Czech playwright Karel Capek in his play *R.U.R.,* which was written in 1921. Another example would be the word spaceship which was first used in the 1890s. More recently, the terms and media *anime* and *manga*[20] have been popularized enough that have their own sections in major chain bookstores. These words are now so commonplace they are no longer fan words. Throughout this study, I will periodically use genre language, defining terms as it becomes appropriate.

On Learning

So why are we interested in science fiction fandom as a culture or affinity group? According to Gee (2004), "it is clear that deep learning works better as a cultural process than it does as an instructed process" (p. 13). We learn language from the communities to which we belong. This process starts with our families, our home community; this language is our vernacular. Gee contends, however, that there are a multitude of other, specialist languages to learn. These may be learned either in the home or outside of it. I would argue that science fiction fandom is one of the communities where members learn

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[20] Definitions are provided in Chapter 4.

specialist language. It is not just what we learn to read but how that is important. According to Gee (2004), word meanings do not always match dictionary definitions; instead, they often have meanings based on different situations. These different situations result in specialist language. What is the best way to learn the forms of this specialist language? "By playing the games that are used in [the group]. This is so because the games they are used in are what give them specific meaning" (p. 41). We all play these games when we take specific identities that are defined by certain moves. Members of the science fiction fandom community take on the role of fan and sometimes the role of expert; as such they learn specific types of knowledge and language and how to demonstrate these. How do fans acquire that knowledge and language? Through embodied context, Gee tells us that people learn best when "understanding is embodied; that is, when they can relate that content to possible activities, decisions, talk and dialogue" (p. 39). I would argue that fandom, partly through, the science fiction convention, creates just this situation by presenting these activities and opportunities for talk.

Members of the community teach and learn by using several of Gee's (2003) learning principles which encompass the way information is dispensed, acquired, stored, and dispersed. These will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 5.

On Multiple Literacies

It is relevant at this time to consider in greater depth what I mean by multiple literacies. For centuries, literacy meant the ability to read and comprehend the printed word, most often in books. Additionally, literate people could write in approved genres such as college compositions or business letters. I would argue, however, that with the

advent of the digital age literacy requires many new skills, or at least skills previously less valued. Science fiction fandom has for decades used traditional literacy skills. Additionally, it has adapted these skills to many new media.

The New London Group [n.d.] describes the aspects of traditional literacy "as "'mere literacy' [which] remains centered on language only, and usually on a singular national form of language at that, which is conceived as a stable system based on rules such as mastering sound-letter correspondence. This is based on the assumption that we can discern and describe correct usage" (para. 11). This is evidenced by the myriad of teacher texts that define and describe how reading is taught and learned. For example, the National Institute for Literacy [2006] defines five specific skills needed for reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and text comprehension) to be learned; this strongly implies that literacy is comprised solely of these skills, which must be taught in the above order. Further, no mention is made of any type of text beyond conventional print.

First, it should be noted that there is another school of thought than that recommends that traditional literacy be taught in a different fashion than that recommended by the abovementioned National Institute for Literacy. (Krashen, 2003). Krashen, the leading advocate of free voluntary reading (or Sustained Silent Reading as it has been called in the schools) demonstrates the value of letting the kids read first, and teaching skills as they progress. This, it seems, is what fans did. They read voraciously, anything they wanted, books above their reading level, and non-traditional texts including comic books.

Instead, the New London Group [1996] advocates that modern literacy pedagogy take into account the "burgeoning variety of text forms associated with information and multimedia technologies. This includes understanding and competent control of representational forms that are becoming increasingly significant in the overall communications environment, such as visual images and their relationship to the written word" (para. 2). Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, and Cammack (2004) describe several new forms of text when they discuss literacy including web logs (blogs), word processors, video editors, World Wide Web browsers, Web editors, e-mail, spreadsheets, presentation software, instant messaging, plug-ins for Web resources, listservs, bulletin boards, avatars, and virtual worlds. Leu et. al. (2004) point out that these new text forms require "the skills, strategies, and dispositions necessary to successfully use and adapt to the rapidly changing information and communication technologies [ICTs] and contexts that continuously emerge in our world and influence all areas of our personal and professional lives" (para 8). They go on to explain that "[t]hese new literacies allow us to use the Internet and other ICTs to identify important questions, locate information, critically evaluate the usefulness of that information, synthesize information to answer those questions, and then communicate the answers to others" (para 8). It seems that students in modern classrooms will need new literacy skills if they are going to be effective learners and workers in the future.

Embodied within the above definition are two other types of literacy: visual literacy and computer literacy. Visual literacy has been defined as

> a group of vision-competencies a human being can develop by seeing and at the
> same time having and integrating other sensory experiences. […] When

developed, they enable a visually literate person to discriminate and interpret the visible actions, objects, symbols, natural or man-made, that he encounters in his environment. Through the creative use of these competencies, he is able to communicate with others. Through the appreciative use of these competencies, he is able to comprehend and enjoy the masterworks of visual communication. (Avgerinou, n.d., para. 1).

In simple terms, we must learn to read the pictures. This is especially true now that classroom teachers are armed with the Internet and projectors, so that they are likely to use the rich body of valuable materials available online.

One of the reasons we need to learn to read and write more than traditional text is the availability and ease of information retrieval and communication via the computer, requiring computer literacy.   According to a proposal by William Shoaf at the Florida Institute for Technology, a computer literate person must be able to set up a personal computer, access the Internet, use word processing and spread sheet programs, use graphic and artworks programs, and use the computer to communicate with others. The University of Idaho (2011) expands these requirements by explaining that these skills need to be adjusted to traditional information literacy skills by requiring that readers be able "to identify what information is needed, understand how the information is organized, identify the best sources of information for a given need, locate those sources, evaluate the sources critically, and share that information." In other words, new readers must be able to effectively adapt new technology to communication and information skills in order to be a literate person in modern society.

Finally, there is what I would call genre literacy. When you read you must know what you are reading, why you are reading it, and the context within which the material was written. Roberts (1990) explains that

> the reading of genre fiction is one of the kinds of reading that are text superior. The reader is reading not the text but the genre by means of the text. The reader is following the interplay among the texts, the changes in what is newly permitted, what is worth exploring, what can be abandoned. We can follow this byplay only if we are able to read a very large number of stories […]. (p. 62)

As a science fiction fan, the reader needs to determine in which subgenre he or she is reading then be cognizant of stories within that subgenre and in the genre as a whole to compare, contrast and synthesize the text into an appreciated experience. A good example of this would be Stirling's *In the Court of the Crimson Kings* (2008). The Introduction is set is set at an imaginary WorldCon where several well-known authors are sitting around watching the first Mars landing. Recognizing these authors attracts reader interest and demonstrates that this will be a "hard science fiction" novel, which in turn prepares the reader to look for the physical and astronomical data provided to give authenticity to the story. Additionally, since many traditional-appearing texts may refer to movies, television or computer games, a reader needs knowledge of those. Even media such as movies refer to printed text. For example, Eric Brevig's movie production of *Journey to the Center of the Earth* (2007) starring Brendan Frazier brings the print version back into popular culture, as one of the leading characters is continuously referring to his father's copy of the text.

Science fiction is rich in many different kinds of text. Love of its original literature led to the development of an affinity group and/or a subculture that calls itself fandom. As technology and membership have expanded, so have its types and methods of reading text grown. This group perpetuates itself by educating newcomers and providing experts with new information. It can, if motivated, serve as model of the value of affinity groups and multiple literacies.

CHAPTER 3

A HUMAN IS ULTIMATELY THE SUM OF HIS EXPERIENCES[21]

> *… To exhibit the perfect uselessness of knowing the answer*
>
> *to the wrong question….*
>
> -- Ursula K. LeGuin, *The Left Hand of Darkness*

I chose this statement made by one of the characters from the third *Star Trek* series*, Deep Space Nine* as a title because it describes part of what makes someone a fan. A person who reads or watches science fiction is not a true fan until he or she shares those experiences with others, either directly or virtually through the Internet. This study will focus on some of the experiences shared by fandom at a science fiction convention. The textual quote from *The Left Hand of Darkness* stood out to me as I read the novel this time, because it seemed to embody my struggle to avoid asking questions to which I already knew the answer. This chapter discusses how I chose and described the experiences that were studied in this paper.

Science Fiction Conventions

Starting in the 1970s, academics began studying science fiction, using established tools such as literary criticisms of printed texts or analyses of amateur writing (i.e. fan fiction and fanzines). As the impact of electronic media on society began to grow, academics began studying electronic forms of media, such as movies and television. Although these types of studies are invaluable for the advancement of our understanding of the genre and some aspects of fan interest, they neglect fan culture where it is represented at its broadest--at the science fiction convention, which is defined by the Los

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[21] From *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine.* Uttered by Captain Benjamin Sisko in "Emissary," Season 1, Episode 1, Aired January 3, 1993.

Angeles Science Fiction Society (2006) as

> a multiple day event where like-minded people (fans) get together to enjoy each
> other's company and meet people who work within the science fiction and fantasy
> genre, whether books, art, film, TV, or audio. There are generally specific Guests
> of Honor or special themes around which the entire experience revolves in terms
> of programming and events (para 1).

These conventions often cover many different aspects of the genre and provide fans with
a place to interact with their genre and each other. Often fans who normally interact over
the Internet will use the convention as an opportunity for face-to-face meetings. Typical
events at conventions include panel discussions, an art show, a dealers' room, a
masquerade, an awards event, and social events such as dances and room parties.

Research in such an environment is key to understanding fandom, at least in a
naturalistic philosophy, because "realities are wholes that cannot be understood in
isolation from their contexts" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 39). To understand science
fiction fans, you need to go where many of them are naturally found. For this reason, I
have chosen to explore the dynamics of fan culture in the context of a convention, a place
where the culture's most characteristic features can best be observed.

Research Framework

While a quantitative study may have value in answering some questions, reliance
solely on the use of tables and statistics can render life flat and colorless. As Rubin and
Rubin (2005) explain, "boiling down answers into numbers strips away the context,
losing much of the richness and complexity that make research realistic" (p.2). Further, as
Lincoln and Guba (1985) tell us that qualitative methods "are more adaptable to dealing

with multiple (and less aggregatable) realities" (p. 40). Simply put, to show the reader what science fiction fandom really looks like, a qualitative study must be done.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, this study has ethnographic characteristics because by their very nature ethnographies are designed to study a culture. According to Rubin and Rubin (2005) "[e]thnographies are studies that sketch an overall cultural setting […] research describes the key norms, rules, values, traditions and rituals in that setting, and shows how they fit together" (p. 7). This paper is designed to do just that--provide a sketch, or perhaps a more detailed drawing, which will present the reader with a picture of what science fiction fans do when they come together as a group.

Although this study will provide thick description of as much of the culture—its context, activities, interactions and artifacts—as is possible for one person to see over a three day period, it should be noted that it is in no way a definitive look at science fiction fandom. It can perhaps be best described as a collage or a series of vignettes in the lives of a group of a people. The vignettes described during the observation phase of this study will be augmented through interviews with convention participants who can provide different interpretations of activities and interactions; however, since time, space and consideration for its members limit the number of people who can be interviewed, the picture must remain unfinished. As Geertz (1973) so aptly points out, "[c]ultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete. And, worse than that, the more deeply it goes the less complete it is" (p. 29).

Although this study is mainly qualitative in nature, I do not deny the validity of quantitative methods. Some of the facets I explored required the use of basic descriptive statistics. For instance, to explore the claim that fans are multiliterate, it was necessary to

show that the majority of fans do routinely use many kinds of literacy. Additionally, to use a term such as "majority" implies quantitative data. This kind of data was collected in a questionnaire that was submitted anonymously to me during the convention. (The data collection process, as well as the questionnaire, will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter and in Chapter 4.)

Considering Researcher Bias

Early in my research considerations, I was concerned that my obvious bias toward the community might negatively impact the credibility of this study. However, I have also come to see the benefits of the insider perspective. As part of my research, I had read other studies that had been done about fandom. Two of these, *Enterprising Women* (1991) and *Science Fiction Culture* (1999) are by Camille Bacon-Smith, who takes the stance of outsider observer. Although both monographs are valuable and informative, they often seemed, to me, to lack a sense of completeness; perhaps this is because, as Hellekson and Busse (2006) point out, Bacon-Smith's "self-chosen outsider status prohibits her from fully understanding the bonds she observes" (p. 19). Hellekson and Busse also observed that in her attempt to gain academic respect through objectivity, she may have lost the trust and approval of the fans about whom she chose to write. Lincoln and Guba (1985) might claim that the difficulty lay in the fact that "[o]bjectivity is an illusion" (p. 62). It therefore seemed to me that objectivity was not really what I wanted.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), being an insider has an important advantage: it allows access to tacit knowledge, "the set of understandings … that cannot be defined" (p. 195). This knowledge cannot be easily obtained by outsiders because it can only be acquired through experience. It is this tacit knowledge that "becomes the

base on which the human instrument builds many of the insights and hypotheses that will eventually develop" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 198). As a member of fandom, I have developed the tacit knowledge that was needed to read beyond overt words and symbols. As an academic, I have the training to turn my observations and tacit knowledge into propositional knowledge so that I can think about my findings and communicate them to others (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In addition to providing useful tacit knowledge, my long term and continuous interactions with the community allow me to "become so much a part of the context that […] [I] can no longer be considered a 'disturbing' element (or at least the degree of disturbance [is] minimized)" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 192). In other words, because my participants have been people I have visited with (at least casually) for many conventions, they will be less likely to be affected by my presence as a researcher.

So, instead of objectivity, I adopt the attitude of Hellekson and Busse (2007) who describe themselves as both fan-scholars and scholar-fans. For them, their positions as intimate members of the fandom they study are assets in their research. "[W]e contend that our self-definition as participants and observers does not hinder us from seeing but rather helps us to see a more comprehensive picture of fandom" (p. 25). Because they are participants as well as observers in their study, Hellekson and Busse argue that their "awareness of [their] subject positions […] creates a stronger, not a weaker, affect" (p. 24). From this viewpoint, non-objectivity provides complexity and thoroughness to the picture this ethnography paints.

Site Selection

When I first proposed this study to my dissertation director, I wanted to do research at a WorldCon, specifically the one being held in Tokyo, Japan. I thought it would be an interesting study to observe how two different language cultures interacted within science fiction culture. There was one problem with this plan, however; very little had been written about fandom describing it as a culture when fans met face to face. Most of the focus on fan culture had been on its relationship to electronic media such as movies or television (e.g. Bacon-Smith or Hills), and the Internet (Hellekson & Busse, 2007). It quickly became apparent that before I could study the interactions of these two sub-groups, I would need first to describe fandom as a whole; a study of the culture needed to be done. As a result of this revelation, I determined that another convention I routinely attended—in this case, LosCon--would provide a more manageable view of science fiction culture.

I have been an active participant of at least ten of these conventions over the last fifteen years. As such, I am already known and trusted by many of its members. During the course of my class work, I had mentioned to a few of these people that I was considering doing some sort of study about fandom, to which I received several very positive responses such as "I would like to read that one day." Further, because LASFS is the "world's oldest continuously-active science-fiction and fantasy club" (Los Angeles Science Fiction Society, n.d.), its history provides further evidence that science fiction culture as observed at a convention has decades of tradition. Finally, because this convention has been held at the same hotel for several years, I was familiar with the site and would therefore not waste time looking for places from which to do my observations.

Data Collection

Data was collected three ways for this study: 1) as observations made by myself; 2) through responses to an anonymous questionnaire; and 3) by interviews with members of the community. This variety of sources provided a method of triangulating data, thereby adding a measure of trustworthiness to the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

For ethical reasons, throughout my time at this convention, as part of my costume, I wore a large ribbon that read "Warning! You are being studied." As Lincoln and Guba (1985) point out, although unobtrusive measures in public domains may be fruitful, it may be ethically questionable to use them if some of those involved in these activities are ignorant subjects and not willing participants. In all cases where conversations might have been recorded or photographs were being taken, release/consent forms were provided to anyone in the vicinity. (See Appendices A-H for copies of the different release forms). Additionally, I told everyone I met that I was doing a study and that they were invited to participate by attending my room party. Friends who volunteered to help with this party also spread the word that the study was being done.

In addition to informing the general membership of the convention, I also requested permission from the organizers of the convention to do the study at their event. First, ethical research required that I make the organizers aware of my intentions. To do this, I made use of one of my Los Angeles connections, BN, to put me in touch with the chairman for that year's convention, MM. (The chairperson's approval can be found at the top of the first page of Appendix M.) However, from a more practical standpoint, I needed to talk to the party maven whose job it is to allocate hotel rooms on the party floor for convention members who are throwing parties. (Party Maven is the official title of the

person who keeps track of the room parties being thrown). (Correspondence with this community leader can also be found in Appendix M.)

During the convention, I participated in, and observed, a variety of activities and attended several events. These activities were chosen for three reasons: a) I routinely have commitments to help with these activities, so I was attending them anyway; b) these activities are commonly found at most science fiction conventions; and c) they were of particular interest to me or my immediate family. The events and activities formally observed were either static and persistent, such as the art show and dealers' room, or episodic, such as panel discussions.

To collect data at static sites, I first wandered around the area to gain a general feeling of the space and to identify locations where I could get a good view of the area. Sometimes, I would use my video or still camera to record the environment. Then I would sit down to write about what I saw, felt and heard in the area. Although I had originally planned to move around a space to get different angles, this proved more difficult than I expected. Often when I sat down to make notes, someone would see me and come over to talk. Of course, then I would have to tell them about what I was doing. This had the positive effect of giving me an opportunity to recruit that person for my data collection party; however, it had the opposite effect for collecting observation data. Fortunately, I was able to use the video camera for some of these observations.

In the evening, usually between dinner and the night's social activities, I made time to read over my notes in order to correct errors, clarify my writing, or add any new thoughts. This was also a good time to reflect in my journal about what had been done or still needed doing. Because of the static nature of some events such as the Dealers' Room,

I was able, at times, to go to back check my observations another day. Or, if it was a one time event that I had been observing, my journal allowed me to make notes quickly and then share, and therefore clarify, my observations with other convention attendees.

The process of collecting data during the episodic events was different from observing the static displays, since 1) I could not just wander in and out of activities like panel discussions; and 2) I had to be at them at specific times. Fortunately, since panels happen throughout the convention, I was able to observe some panels as well as prepare and participate in my own. Although the audience and panel members may vary as much as the topics being discussed, in general, the appearance of the venues did not change. During this type of observation, I made notes, considered my thinking and then made plans to attend another such activity to check my observations. However, in panels where I was a participant, the focus of my thoughts had to be the topic under discussion, not what I was going to write on a future dissertation.

Although the environment is part of what creates a convention, far more important are the people who inhabit that space. Part of the data gathered was through a questionnaire that could be returned anonymously. (See Appendix L for a copy of this questionnaire.) The purpose of this questionnaire was two-fold. First, it was used to gather basic data about members' interactions with the genre and the types of literacy acts in which they are engaged. Typical items inquired about the aspects of science fiction and fantasy enjoyed by the participant and established the participants' history and activities at conventions. Second, and perhaps more importantly, it was a request for an interview. After an appropriate warning, the last question asked the participant for his or her name and if he or she would be willing to participate in an in-depth conversation about their

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participation in fandom. These were conducted either via the Internet or telephone at some later date, since I did not wish to interfere with my conversational partners' regular activities at the convention, and geographic considerations made face-to-face interviews difficult. All conversations were recorded, with the participant's consent, either using a tape recorder or computer media.

The method used to distribute the questionnaire was a bit unconventional. Science fiction fans are used to being "rewarded" for their support. For example, conventions that change locations annually such as Westercon or WorldCon recruit votes by providing food and beverages at parties or freebies at fan tables (both activities will be described later in this study). Since I wanted to be free to wander about to make environmental observations, I opted to host a room party rather than to set up a fan table with information and freebies in order to gain the support of questionnaire participants. The theme of the party had been discussed using a focus group (a small collection of friends with whom I was eating breakfast at BayCon in May 2009). BN suggested the party be called Thesis Complesis, which was immediately adopted by the rest of the group. A detailed description of the party can be found in Chapter 4.

The initial sampling method used was convenience sampling since there were limits to the amount of time that could be spent on this segment of the research. Because the convention is only two and a half days long[22], I had a very limited time in which to do my observations, survey participants and recruit interviewees. Furthermore, in regards to the survey collection party, I had no control over the attendees. Over 1,000 people attend this convention annually and by definition they are all invited to the room parties. The only requirement for attendance was a convention badge. We (my "lab assistants" and I)

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[22] The convention officially opens at 10 am the Friday after Thanksgiving. It closes about noon on Sunday.

estimated that over 300 people attended the party, since almost 250 surveys were collected.

Convenience sampling was also chosen out of consideration for the participants. Because this method relies on easily accessible volunteers (Teddlie & Yu, 2007, p. 77), I did not interfere with the plans of the people who provided me information. My informants were on their vacation. I did not wish to alienate them by forcing them to have extended time with me during the convention. Additionally, because no convention members were excluded from the party and because people were actively invited to the party, I avoided bias by not surveying just people I knew or people who only did things that I did.

To protect participants' identities, the surveys were locked in my hotel room under my computer after the party for about 18 hours until I packed my bags and drove to the San Francisco Bay Area on Sunday afternoon. There, to give participants anonymity, I separated the consent forms, which had names and signatures on them, from the questionnaires. If the participants had signed the form giving me permission to make further contact, I stapled that form to the survey. The materials have since been kept in a locked file cabinet in my home in Florida.

As discussed above, one of the purposes of the survey was to recruit people to talk about their lives in fandom. Since LosCon attracts over 1,000 people annually, it would not be possible to speak to all of them. Because as mentioned earlier, an academic had previously been rejected in her attempts to do research, I chose to speak to those most willing to speak to me. I was asking for time in busy people's lives and I wanted them to have time to talk to me. After the convention, I emailed everyone who had signed an

Informed Consent Form (See Appendix E) and provided me with contact information. Persons who answered my request for further contact were asked when and how it would be convenient for me to contact them. Conversational partners were chosen based on a number of criteria:

1) Partner motivation. Did it seem that that person really wanted to talk to me? I did not want to "bully" people into participating. If they answered my requests for contact quickly, I assumed they were interested in the study and wanted to share their stories. I considered this a community study and I wanted the community to participate because they were interested in what I was doing. Indeed, in some cases such as California Fan and P. Jourdain, the interview was temporarily sidetracked as we started to discuss their research projects.

2) Diversity of interview methods. This study includes literacy, a form of communication. I wanted to see how fans would choose to communicate with me. Although many of them did choose to talk to me over the phone because it was easiest for them, some of them also chose to write their responses via email (which allowed them to respond when they chose as they chose). Additionally, two of the participants accepted my offer of a Facebook Chat, an online social networking tool, as a means of communicating with me.

3) Convenience. Some people indicated an interest in talking to me but were traveling or involved in major projects at work or at home during the interview period of this study. Although I would have appreciated their input, convenient times to do so could not be arranged.

4) Interest. I made the final decision of who to communicate with based on my

personal interest. I chose to talk to people I did not know well, because I felt that

they would have ideas I had not considered before.

Although the purpose of this paper is to add to the academic body of knowledge

on fandom, it is also hoped that it will be of interest to fandom itself. With this in mind, I

chose to consider interviewees as conversational partners. Rubin and Rubin (2005) use

this term because it emphasizes,

> the active role of the interviewee in shaping the discussion and in guiding what
>
> paths the research should take. Moreover, the term suggests a congenial and
>
> cooperative experience, as both the interviewer and interviewee work together to
>
> achieve a shared understanding. (p. 14)

This attitude portrays an interview as a partnership and gives the research a sense

of community ownership. It also acknowledges the uniqueness of each individual, many

of whom, in this environment, pride themselves on standing out in a crowd.

More importantly, a conversational style assumes a more personalized interview.

In these interviews, each of the questions was asked of the interviewees, but not

necessarily in the order that they were written. As we talked, I would ask the questions on

the list. However, I did not confine my conversation partners to the questions I asked. I

just let them talk. Often they would answer questions I had intended to ask before I asked

them. Although the questions were pre-planned (see Appendix I & J for a list of these

questions), the interview was designed to flow naturally, allowing my conversational

partners to provide me with data across a wide variety of subjects important to them. As

Rubin and Rubin (2005) explain "[i]f you impose on them questions about what you

think is important, you may substitute your ill-informed view of the field for their

experienced and knowledgeable one" (p. 15). It appeared to me that this research philosophy might also help reduce researcher bias. Rather than my asking questions that might only get answers I wanted or expected, this method seemed more likely to get answers or descriptions that I needed to hear.

<div align="center">Data Analysis</div>

Once the interviews had been transcribed, the information needed to be coded—a method that makes note of concepts, ideas, events, and themes. For this study, a grounded theory (or open coding) model of coding was used. Rather than looking for concepts identified through literature, this model assumed that "concepts and themes must emerge from the data without the use of the literature" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 221-222). As these scholars point out, this method is particularly apropos when a researcher is concerned that "the literature and existing theory might be putting blinders on [him/her] so [s/he] cannot see what is in his data" (p. 222). Since I was already concerned about researcher bias, I wanted to make sure I let the community tell me what was important.

Obviously, I had some preconceived notions. I was looking for multiliteracies, so my coding reflected that. I also wanted to see how fans interacted with and in school, so there were other terms I was looking for. The concepts I assumed I would find (such as "bored in school or "early reader") are indicated by an "*" in the list below. However, my conversational partners provided several more ideas I had not anticipated (such as "generationalism" and "collecting") as we chatted or as I read over their transcripts. The terms I coded for can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Terms Used for Coding Interviews

Bored in school*	Early reader*	Media literate*	Subculture –yes
Born to fandom	Fans are smart	Mixed generations	The thing to do
Collecting	Generationalism	Raised in fandom	Turned off to writing
Computer literate	Genre literate	Reader*	Tolerance
Cons for acceptance	History	Science fiction for science	Variety of reading
Cons for self-education	Look at the future	Slow to learn school game	Visually literate
Cons for talk	Mainstream is different*	Socializing influence	Writer*
Didn't fit in	Mainstream is dull	Subculture – no*	Well-rounded reader

The computer made the actual physical job of coding a bit more efficient since I could use the "New Comment" tool to indicate codes or the highlight key to put labels in the margins of my transcripts or to indicate ideas of interest. After I completed reading and labeling the transcripts, I used the "Search" function to find each place I had given a certain label.

Issues of Confidentiality

As noted above, study participants who chose to remain completely anonymous could simply fill out a questionnaire without including any identifying information on the page. Although I did collect consent forms from people who submitted the questionnaire, as indicated above, they were immediately separated from the form so that it became impossible to tell who had submitted which survey. Anonymity was also guaranteed to conversational partners. Conversational partners consenting to be interviewed were asked to pick names by which I could identify them in the dissertation; their real names were recorded on a sheet of paper which has been locked in a file cabinet in Florida, never to

be read anywhere near the study site in California.

However, no such guarantee of anonymity could be made to persons consenting to be photographed for this study, as the logistics necessary to do so would be nearly impossible for two reasons that stem from the same source: costuming. First, many of the fans I photographed work very hard on the outfits they wear to conventions (which may include elaborate headgear); so they want to show them off. The clothes and the people in them are part of the culture that should be seen. Further, these people want to be seen, and their photographs often appear in fanzines and on websites (especially costumes that have won awards). Finally, since so many people are in recognizable garb, it would be nearly impossible to hide the identity of the wearer simply by blurring out the person's face. In this case, trying to maintain anonymity would limit my photographs to physical artifacts only.

In lieu of anonymity, I offered any participants I photographed information and the option to participate. I made sure that I explained to everyone what I was doing and why. Any person I photographed was asked to sign a consent form. If anyone appeared to have qualms about providing consent, I did not use the photograph. If a person could not be identified to provide consent, the photograph was not used. Any possibly identifiable persons in the study have given their permission to be seen.

Trustworthiness

An important criterion of trustworthiness in naturalist research is creditability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) One of the activities that increases the probability of creditability is triangulation, which verifies the accuracy of specific data. As mentioned earlier, triangulation was accomplished through multiple methods of data collection (interviews,

questionnaires, and observations) as well as any evidence available in existing academic literature. Credibility was also enhanced by another concept touched upon earlier: prolonged engagement or the investment of sufficient time to learn the culture, build trust and prevent distortion (Lincoln & Guba, 1985.) As a long-standing member of the community, I have invested many hours positioning myself in a place where I can observe the group. Finally, credibility requires persistent observation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) that adds salience to the research. The purpose of persistent observation is to identify elements relevant to the study, to be sure that the observer is not focusing on items that are not relevant to the community. It is here that my position as a scholar-fan is most significant; I am trained to observe as an academic and I have been part of the community long enough to not be distracted by irrelevancies.

In order to track my thinking during this research and to give it some consistency, I kept a diary of my research and experience. This reflexive journal was used to help me think about my methodological decisions and make my thought processes open to public scrutiny (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). For example, during dinner at BayCon while I was recruiting help for the data collection party, my tablemates had several ideas about the theme and decorations for the party. I used the journal to write down their suggestions, so that when formal party planning occurred, I had their ideas to inspire my plans. My journal also proved useful on the flight home from BayCon, as it allowed me to meditate on the kinds of people I had met at that convention, and therefore the variety of people I wanted to interview when I began my research in full.

In addition, my journal, being reflexive in nature, encouraged me to write down my thoughts about science fiction culture as I was describing it. This reflexivity both

helped reveal bias and allowed me to consider what to do (if anything) about it. As mentioned in the first chapter, this study was also something of an autoethnography, and the journal assisted me in seeing myself. In both of its uses, the journal provided an audit trail of my research and thereby increased the trustworthiness of this report.

Another method used to establish trustworthiness was peer debriefing, the process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer […] for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer's mind" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p 308). In this study, the debriefers were taken from an online support group, the IUPABD club, which was created by a small group of my peers to help each other resolve problems and reduce stress caused by the dissertation writing process. We also used each other for research ideas and concept development. Sometimes we would just email each other what we working on. (Pierce, J., Sams, D. & Greenstone, K., 2011) Peer debriefing provided credibility by keeping the researcher honest with herself by making sure that she is "as fully aware of […] her posture and process as possible (remembering that while it is not possible to divest oneself of values, it is at least possible to be aware of the role they play)" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308). This was important, in this study, as I am intimately involved with the community and therefore, needed less involved judges with whom to discuss my interpretations and analyses. Ideally, peer debriefers are experts on the subject themselves; however, few, if any, of my peers were experts. The members of my support group, however, did have the other qualifications of peer debriefers: 1) they were familiar with the methodological issues of writing an ethnography; and 2) they were willing to question my methods and decisions to ensure that they are consistent and logical. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the "most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (p. 314) is the member check that provides study participants the opportunity to respond to information provided during the study. For this study, individuals were sent the transcripts of our interviews and the portions of the study to which they contributed via email. My conversation partners were asked for feedback on the transcripts and on my interpretation of the data they provided. Additionally, the entire dissertation will be posted on a website developed for that purpose so that anyone in the community can comment on the study and its findings. This will be done as a courtesy to members of the community who expressed curiosity about the dissertation, and as a means to solicit more information for possible future studies.

In conclusion, I would like to say that I consider this a community project. It could not have been done without the cooperation of Los Angeles fandom. It is to be hoped that by using good research methods, I have accurately and respectfully portrayed fannish activities and attitudes in the pages that follow.

CHAPTER 4

I CAN'T THINK OF ANY PLACE I'D RATHER BE

OR ANY PEOPLE I'D RATHER BE WITH … [23]

Ideas, that's what fans are for[24]

-- Fallen Angels

I believe that this chapter's title, taken from a toast given at the end of the *Star Trek: Voyager* series, sums up the attitudes of many fans. It is at a convention that fans meet and share, so the place is important to fans. However, it is the people and their ideas that make fandom exciting. The purpose of the next two chapters is to describe science fiction fandom, and some of its interactions with text. The end result will be to produce for the reader a picture of this community. Chapter 5 will describe the fans, the people who make up the community using a combination of interviews and the results of a survey conducted during the convention. But first, Chapter 4, through words and pictures, will describe the environment and activities in which fans interact. So I begin this study with a description of how my data was collected—at a room party. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, another researcher had mentioned studying a convention at LosCon but had been met with cold stares and rejection. However, since I have been in the community for years, I knew how to pique fans' interest--attach the study to a party.

Due to the importance of the party scene at the convention, 86% of the survey respondents indicated they would attend parties at the convention; I begin this chapter with a description of my Thesis Complesis party. From there I will describe other parties, then move on to describing other activities. After describing these physical spaces and

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[23] From *Star Trek: Voyager.* Uttered by Harry Kim in "Endgame," Season 7, Episode 25, Aired May 23, 2001.
[24] Niven, D., Pournelle, J. & Flynn, M. (p. 127)

events, I will use the responses of some of the fans to describe attitudes towards their

genre, their community and themselves. Finally, I will create a more general picture of

fandom by including some of the demographic data collected from the survey done at the

Thesis Complesis party.

On Collecting the Data: My Room Party (Thesis Complesis)

Party preparation took weeks of planning. An outline of this process is provided below.

Stage 1: Permission. Although no one needs permission to meet people in his or

her room, potential hosts must be assigned a room on the party floor, which in 2009 was

the 17th floor. The existence of the party floor serves two purposes: 1) it puts all the

parties in one place so that they are easily found by community members; and 2) it

prevents hotel guests who are not members of the community from having to listen to

loud parties until the wee hours of the morning. My correspondence with the appropriate

convention personnel can be found in Appendix M.

Stage 2: Advanced Preparations. Since I was flying across country, BN contacted

the badge and sticker maker for me two months before the convention, and had a friend

design our flyers. When I landed in Los Angeles, RM met me at the airport, and then took

me shopping for groceries and decorations.

Stage 3: At the Convention Hotel. An announcement for the party was made in the

convention newsletter and flyers were posted at the official places for announcements

using the hotel-required blue painter's tape. These flyers periodically vanished from the

bulletin board, possibly because people took them as reminders of where and when the

event would be held. In such cases, the flyers were quickly replaced either by DD or

myself. Additionally, volunteers at the OASIS ("Organization for the Advancement of

Space Industrialization and Settlement") fan table also distributed flyers as they talked to passing fans.

Stage 4: Party Day. I had three "lab assistants" help me with room decorations and food preparation. Food is an important part of the room party experience. Good food and beverages encourage people to support your activity. For example, in 1996 when groups were bidding to host the 1998 WorldCon, the beverages were an important factor. Boston had the support of Sam Adams, while Baltimore had the support of Captain Morgan; Baltimore won. I did not want to deal with the security issues of serving alcohol; instead, I went for creative food use. I discovered that Tab (a Coke product known for its saccharine content) was still available, so I acquired several cans, mostly for window dressing. I also provided more traditional sodas and some kind of punch RM spotted at the grocery store. It was such a vibrant scarlet it had to have contained Red Dye Number Really Bad For You. Traditionally, non-alcoholic beverages are served in the bathtub, which is lined with plastic and filled with ice. I had acquired several toy mice and rats from a pet store, some of which were taped to the shower curtain rail and the bathtub faucet. The food was, of course, several types of cheese. For texture, I included crackers as well. More cat toy mice were artfully placed in and around the cheese chunks and in the bowls of crackers. Furniture was rearranged so that I had a safe place to put the box for the completed surveys. In the meantime, DD set the camcorder up in a corner of the room. The camera itself became a topic of conversation during the party as some people seemed fascinated by its small size.

The hotel room itself was decorated as a mad scientist's laboratory. For example, attendees enjoyed playing with a static electricity ball and a robotic mouse that had been

set out for party guests to interact with and to stimulate conversation. Furthermore, my

lab assistants and I were dressed in lab coats indicating that we represented the Mad

Scientists Union Local 3.14, which I had purchased from Software Tees and Toys.
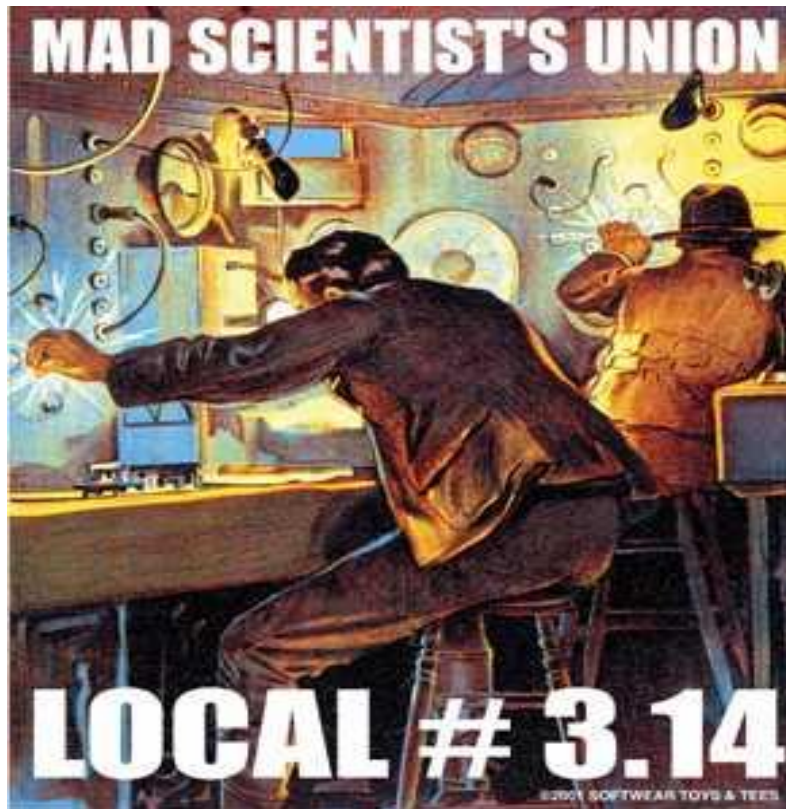
Figure 1. The design from the back of our lab coats at the party.

Copies of the Informed Consent Form (Appendix A) were posted outside the door

of the hotel room and on several prominent spots on the walls, usually near the food and

drink but also on closet doors and near the lab table, which was my working space during

the party. Not only did this help ensure that attendees knew about the study, it also added

a scientific flavor to the decorations.

Stage 5: The Party. The actual physical site of the room party was my hotel room on the party floor (Floor 17) of the convention hotel. The room was close to the elevator, so we received lots of foot traffic as people looked in to see why my door was open (which we opened at around 9 pm to attract the after-Masquerade traffic). One of my "lab assistants," BN, volunteered to be the door monitor; so she spent most of the evening in the hall visiting, inviting people into the room, and explaining the purpose of the party, namely that I was conducting research for my dissertation. Additionally, she stickered everyone's badges with lab rat stickers as they entered the room. This discouraged people from filling out more than one survey, as we could tell if someone had already been to the party by the sticker on his or her badge. (People were allowed to re-enter the party at will for more conversation or food; however, they were not handed a second survey.) While BN was being the door host, DD and RM were circulating the room and halls answering questions, refilling food bowls, and directing people to my party.

I had several roles during the party. I distributed survey packages that included a description of the study (from Appendix B), a consent form (Appendix A), a request for contact form (Appendix E) and the survey itself (Appendix L). I also collected the surveys, making sure that I also received signed consent forms with each one. I distributed "Lab Rat" badge ribbons to any participant who completed a survey.

In the corner of the room straight across from the door was my lab table, my workspace during the party. It was littered in piles of blank surveys and clipboards. One corner was decorated with a static electricity ball to give it that "Frankenstein" look, more mice, a couple of rats, and some cheese toys (cat toys shaped like a piece of Swiss cheese that had a ball inside of it). Completed surveys were folded with the consent form

and placed in the "Specimen Box," which was located on the left hand side of table. The

box itself was completely sealed in green cloth with the words "Specimen" appliquéd on

it.

Figure 2. Researcher collecting survey form from participant.

Stage 6: The Aftermath. We closed the door at around 1 am when people stopped

dropping by to fill out surveys. At that point, my friends helped me do enough cleaning

up so that my husband and I could sleep in the space. The "lab rats" had eaten through

approximately 3 pounds of cheese so there was not much left to stuff back into the ice

chest. We had started with over 200 sodas, of which about half had to be dug out of the

ice water in the bathtub. Perhaps it is relevant that no one tried the Tab or the bright red

punch, but that is for another research study. I collected up the toys and checked the

scattered papers (people tended to leave Appendix A lying about) to make sure nothing

interesting was on them. I did find that someone had drawn a set of his or her own

manga-style figures among the pages on the back of one such sheet. Then my husband

and I remade the bed and collapsed.

The party itself was a huge success. I attribute this to three things: 1) my lab assistants who advertised the party, decorated the room, and kept the theme going; 2) the different theme of the party; and 3) the badge ribbons. As this last element is itself a reflection of fan culture, I will elaborate briefly on it. Badge ribbons may signify an official role, such as identifying the wearer as a presenter or a member of the Con staff or an organization; or a badge may just say something humorous or relevant to the person distributing them. At any rate, they can be considered highly collectable by "ribbon gluttons," whose collections may be several feet long. Indeed, the Con chair came in and begged for a ribbon even though she had not filled out a survey. Since she was the chairwoman, I gave her one. My own badge had six ribbons, three of which provided real information: 1) Lab Rat (I was the host), 2) Program participant (I was on 6 panels), and OASIS (I am a member). Of the remaining three, one was from another party titled "But Wait, They're S'mores," (which was a pun on the convention theme), one was humorous ("I'm just pretending to be underage"), and one was an inside joke ("But I Digress").

Figure 3. Badge & ribbons including the lab rat sticker and ribbons distributed at the party

The Sunday convention bulletin (*Infozine #7)* said of the event "[t]he next party was unique in convention history. […] There were many eager participants as the room was the tightest packed one on the party floor. Definitely won the best attended award."

The room, as the video shows, was packed for two hours. People came in, took a survey, a pen and a clipboard, then sat down on the bed to snack, chat, and fill out the survey. In many cases the topic of conversation was the survey itself; filling it out became a group activity as study participants asked people when they had gone to such-and-such a convention or how to spell "Straczyinski." That the party was so popular was a good thing, in that many people filled out the survey. However, it was also a two-edged sword. The room was so crowded that many people could not get in to get a survey to complete. This is one of the reasons, I believe, that I did not get as many surveys returned as I had hoped.

Figure 4. Scene from the party. Participants can be seen discussing surveys or filling them out. I have come out of the corner to clarify something. I am wearing the lab coat.

There was another possible reason, it should be stated, for this smaller number of surveys than expected. Once again, this second reason reflects an aspect of fan culture, and thus is important to note. There was, according to rumor, a small but active campaign against the study. One fan acquaintance who I spoke to insisted that fans were "unstudyable," so that there was no "validity" to my research, so he would not fill out the survey. Additionally, another older fan did not approve of my studying "multiple" literacies since younger fans "couldn't read anyway" and anything that was not in print did not count as real science fiction. Both of these fans have been members of the community for a long time; it is therefore difficult to determine how much influence they might have had on others in the community.

More Spaces and Activities

Of course, some people just did not have time to come to my party. According to *Infozine* #6, there were eleven parties on that Saturday night, including the following: a) a S'mores party based on the Con's theme of "But Wait… There's More"; b) a party hosted by LepreCon 36, announcing the upcoming Phoenix, AZ convention which had meatballs and root beer on tap; c) the Seattle Westercon 2012 Bid Party, which was serving alcohol; d) the Greater Los Angeles Writers Society Party, which featured pool and mixed drinks; e) the Condor party, which was advertising San Diego, CA's annual convention; f) the BayCon party, which was advertising San Jose, CA's upcoming party while bribing attendees with double chocolate Guinness brownies; and g) the LosCon 37 party, which was recruiting members for the next year's convention. In addition, the convention itself was hosting the Masquerade followed by a Rum Party hosted by "Captain Jack," which

included belly dancing and games such as Spanish Monte, Liars Dice, and Walk the Plank.

On the night before the Thesis Complesis party, I attended and observed another well-attended party, the Apollo 11 40th Anniversary Party. The hosting group was OASIS ("Organization for the Advancement of Space Industrialization and Settlement"), which is the Los Angeles chapter of the National Space Society. This organization promotes space exploration and education. The room was decorated in posters from outer space. Some of the food had a space theme as well: Starbursts and Milky Ways were the candy of choice here. What really attracted people to this party, though, were the giveaways. During the year, members of this group had collected tchotchkes to distribute; then throughout the party a series of raffles was held. The raffle tickets were free but you had to be present to win. Drawings were held every ten minutes, with new tickets being distributed for each drawing. The bags held such items as space posters, space stickers, space trading cards (sets have included the planets and Saturn's moons), books, and little space toys. When I won, my bag included 2 space posters (one commemorating the 40th anniversary of Apollo 11 and one of the XCOR engine test), a set of 4 lithographs of the Mars Pathfinder, a Mars Pathfinder pin and a 4"x6" picture of the Sojourner Rover, 2 window stickers depicting the patches for the 16th and 18th expeditions to the International Space Station and another window sticker representing shuttle flight 125, a magnetic UFO top, and a 3" tall plastic green alien. I also got the DVD of the OASIS trip to Spaceship One's first suborbital flight.

People came into the room to get a raffle ticket and would stop a minute to chat. Some fans stayed for the entire 10-minute period until the next drawing; or they would

wander off to a different party then come back to see if they had won. It seemed that most people managed to re-appear for the drawing, as I never saw RM need to draw more than three tickets before he was able to give a prize away.

There were two other social spaces that fans enjoyed: the ConSuite, and what I called convention sponsored parties. The ConSuite is a room with tables and snacks. In the morning when I went seeking coffee, the snacks included oatmeal. When I dropped by later, the snacks had expanded to peanut butter, jelly and bread. This free food makes the convention affordable for some fans who might struggle to pay for a hotel room and expensive high-priced restaurant food. It is also just a fun place to hang out (two fan conversational partners specified that they intended to spend time there during the convention as did a few survey respondents). Anyone can go there to grab some chips or some M&Ms and chat. The hotel for this convention is right next to the airport, and the ConSuite is on the top floor of the hotel with windows all around; so, sometimes people go there to watch the planes take off and land. Since everyone at the ConSuite is there for the genre, there is always someone to talk to. I spent a moment learning about hat making and then I spent a minute commenting on the price of coffee in the hotel to someone else before I needed to run off to participate in a panel. Because of the free food and beverages, everyone gets to the ConSuite eventually.

LosCon also sponsored more-organized social activities. The Ice Cream Social has been popular for years. It is usually held the opening night of the convention. Who does not like ice cream? It is served out of huge barrels for two hours. There is plenty for everyone; consequently, people start the convention in a good mood. A fan favorite for many years has been the rock dance. The DJ is pretty good, and it is a fun way to meet

people. I have friends who met at the rock dance; they eventually got married. There is also a Regency Dance. I think it is more fun if you go in period costume, but it is not required that you do so. Many people have been doing it for long enough that there is a core group you can copy and they give some instruction as well.

<div align="center">Going Places – A Side Trip</div>

As can be inferred from the above list of other party places, LosCon is often not the only convention fans attend. California Fan, in his interview, talked about being able to attend a convention almost every week while he was living on the East coast. A good place to advertise your convention is to go to other conventions. There are two ways convention locations are chosen. One is to have them in the same location every year. Local groups sponsor these conventions as combination fundraisers, educational activities, and social occasions. Conventions that fall in this category include BayCon (San Jose, CA), ConDor (San Diego, CA), Confluence (Pittsburgh, PA), Chattacon (Chattanooga, TN) and LosCon, which has even been held in the same hotel several years running.

Then there are the conventions that change location annually because they are sponsored by groups that are spread over larger areas. Westercon, which as discussed above relocates across the Western states every year, is one such convention. Another moving convention is WorldCon, which may be located anywhere. The location of this convention is chosen by the members, who vote by secret ballot two years before that convention. Local organizations register bids with the World Science Fiction Society[25]. Then bid committees travel to conventions, hosting parties and sitting at tables, to explain

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[25] For a good description of this process, see http://seattle2011.swoc.org/bidding.

to fans about what their city, planning committee, convention center and hotels have to offer as a WorldCon site. As previously mentioned, bid parties are an important social function at many conventions. Fans with sustaining memberships may vote at a convention. Fans may vote for a location based on its convenience, its tourist interest, or its proposed Guest of Honor list. Another factor taken into consideration is the possible cost of attending. In addition to the cost of an adult membership (in 2011 it will be $195), potential attendees must take into account the cost of getting there and staying there (these were major factors for convention attendance in Japan and Australia). The final factor is the fun factor. Does the bid committee throw a good party? Fans can be bought. If you show them good a time, they will come. For example, when my son was about 10 years old, he asked for an adult convention membership so he could vote for Philadelphia's 2001 WorldCon bid. Its theme focused around Benjamin Franklin, and its room parties had lots of science experiments and quotes from the inventor. My son loved the parties so much he wanted to cast his own ballot. In 2011, World Con will be held in Reno, NV, which has been named "Renovation."[26] Voting for the 2013 site will take place at the Reno WorldCon. The two competing sites are Zagreb, Croatia and San Antonio, Texas.[27]

Convention Membership and Member Privileges

Almost anyone can attend a convention. They are often advertised at local books or through local media outlets. Since conventions are fund-raisers for science fiction clubs, the public is encouraged to attend. To become a convention member you simply

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[26] For more information on Renovation, visit http://www.renovationsf.org/index.php.

[27] Zagreb would be cool. It will probably get the European vote and votes from more adventurous fans who can afford to travel. However, the Texas committee is using San Antonio as their site. It is more economically feasible for many fans, and San Antonio is a fun town. In 1997, it hosted a WorldCon, and the local residents were friendly and openly curious.

pay your membership fee. Often there is a discount for registering for the convention early. Children also usually receive discount. Adult members can buy memberships for part of the convention or the entire period. Full regular members can attend all the activities of the convention. Also, full members can vote at a convention. As discussed above, voting may be done to determine the location of the next convention. Another purpose of voting is to determine the nominees for awards or to determine the award winners (for example the Hugo Awards).

In addition to full membership, fans can purchase other types of memberships. Sustaining memberships include voting rights and access to all generally distributed publications, including newsletters and programs. Such members can usually vote by proxy. Sustaining members can usually upgrade from supporting to attending by paying the difference between the two membership rates. A good example of this would be WorldCon where attendees might buy a sustaining membership (at Renovation it will cost $45) in order to vote for a WorldCon site. The fan can then upgrade the membership if he or she wants to attend the convention that receives the winning bid.

Pre-supporting memberships may be offered to fans to determine interest in a particular location for a convention. The money from these memberships is often used in the campaign for a convention bid. They are often purchased at a different convention during a room party or at a fan table.

Finding Things

Flyers and a Newsletter

How do members know where to find the parties? There are several sources of information at the convention. First, on the hotel floors, where convention members are

likely to pass by, easels are placed where members can post flyers for their parties or other activities. Additionally, the flyers can usually be found at fan tables to advertise the parties or events they are sponsoring. Also, in 2009, there was the *Infozine,* a newsletter, which came out about twice per day during the convention. Issues #3 and #6 included party lists. It also provided a variety of valuable information including additions, cancellations or changes to events, reminders of convention rules (such as that only blue painters tape is allowed for sticking things to walls, or that no more than eight people are permitted in an elevator), directions to rooms, schedules for games and movies, and suggestions for things to do.

<center>*Fan Tables*</center>

The last direct source of information is the fan table. According to the survey, in 2009, more than 1/3 of the convention-goers were planning to stop by one or more of these tables. Fan tables, like room parties, are not officially part of the convention although they must have con approval to be there. Fan groups request tables for their material and then are assigned a space. Fan tables are places where genre-related groups can publicize themselves and their interests. Many groups had brochures about their purposes, upcoming events or convention activities at their tables. Brochures might include such information as the name and type of event, speakers who have committed to attend, and activities, as well as the event's location and date. Decorations and snacks were used to attract fans to the table. Each group then decorated its table appropriately. For example, in 2009, the Orange County Science Fiction Club is orange. The brochures were orange, the tablecloth was orange, even the candy had orange wrappers.

Perhaps less colorful, but equally eye-catching, was the OASIS table. This group

projected, on the wall behind the table, short videos of current rocket projects such as

those done by X-Cor, an aerospace company working on building suborbital vehicles.

The group also set up a display shelf of free *Ad Astra* magazines and OASIS newsletters

next to the table. On the table were small plastic rockets and astronauts. Passers-by

stopped to watch a video clip and grab a Star Burst candy or a Milky Way bar. Sometimes

interested convention goers would browse the magazines and place one or two in their

bag. Occasionally they would add themselves to the mailing list. On rare occasions, a

person would buy a membership. Figure 5 is a photo of the OASIS fan table. The banner

announces the fans' affiliation. To the left is an inflatable space ship and Marvin the

Martian. In front of Marvin is the clipboard, where fans can sign up for the group's

mailing list. The back display board has copies of flyers of recent events. The cardboard

bookcase to the right of the table contains free copies of *Ad Astra* magazine.

Figure 5. The OASIS fan table.

Figure 6 is a more detailed view of another fan table. I took this picture because I liked the "model" that was built to invite notice. The sign announces the theme for the next convention: "A Celebration of Urban Fantasy, Steampunk and SF Noir." In the back you can see the poster which announces the convention dates—November 26-November 28, 2010—and two of the featured guests—urban fantasist Emma Bull and artist Phil Foglio.
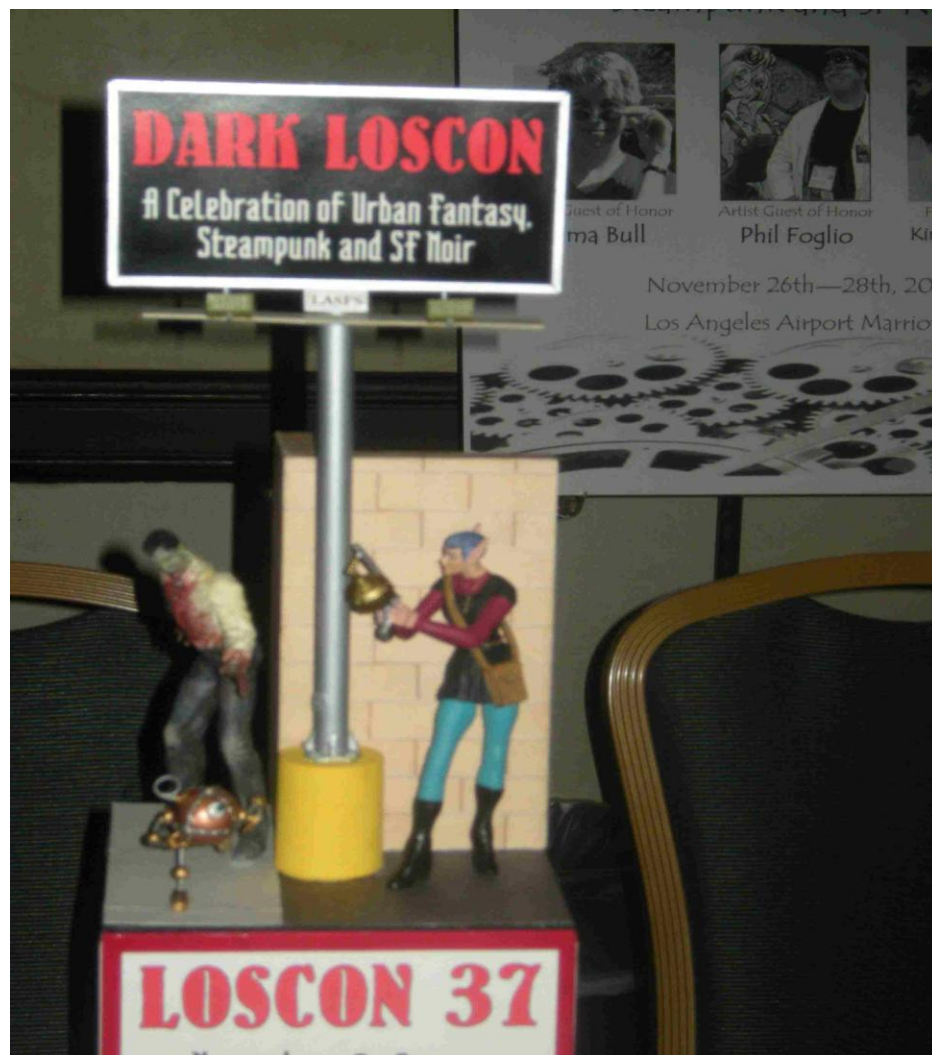
Figure 6. Fan table for LosCon 37 (Thanksgiving Weekend 2010).

Near the fan tables there is usually a freebee table. Anyone can place material here as long as it is free. I picked up all kinds of freebies throughout the weekend. My treasures included the following: a) two movie buttons: *The Frighteners* and *Space Jam*; two bookmarks: one for Michael D'Ambrosio's *Space Frontiers Series* and one recruiting support for The Museum of Mythical History; two game books for a role playing game about comic book superheroes, called the *Supergame*; and a CD-Rom *The Best of Jim Baen's Universe 2006* which is an anthology of classic short stories from the 1950s and 1960s published by Baen Books.

Information is one of the main purposes of the convention; therefore, the convention itself is information intense. The moment a person registers for the convention, he is handed information that will be valuable to someone. First, the member is given a badge that includes the Con's emblem, dates, and location. On the front, the color of the badge and/or a note in the corner indicate how many days' attendance the wearer has purchased. It also includes the member's name and/or use name and where that person is from. On the back of the badge, if applicable, there may be a list of events (including times), which the member is supposed to participate or attend. Badges are often customized by their wearers as they collected items, including the aforementioned badge ribbons and party stickers. These decorations indicate to other people who you know and where you have been. My 2009 badge included a lab rat sticker from my party, a picture of the sole of the Neil Armstrong's moon boot from the OASIS party, and a sticker that looks like an odometer with several 1's reading Westercon, San Jose 2011.

More official information comes in the bag that the member is handed at registration. In 2009, *Shonen Jump,* an American manga magazine sponsored the purple

tote; so it was decorated with a manga character and information about the company's

product. Inside were the convention program, which was 79 pages long, and the program

guide, which was printed on both sides of 3 legal-sized pages. The convention guide

included very brief biographies of participants (providing their qualifications), a list of

pre-registered convention members (so members could tell if friends were planning to

attend, photos of important people (so they could be recognized by fans), a map of the

convention area, a history of the convention, advertisements for other conventions, and

explanations of events and rules for the convention. The program guide, on the other

hand, told members where and when things were going to be held, especially the panels.

<div align="center">*Panels*</div>

Panels are a large part of the daytime activities at conventions. At LosCon 36,

there were 11 active rooms for discussion. Panels are designed to provide information on

a variety of topics that organizers think will be of interest to members. Most participants

are volunteers who have suggested topics for discussion. Other volunteers who might be

"experts" on that subject may also be put on those panels; sometimes these experts will

not know they are on a panel until they get to the convention. Other panelists are guests

of the convention. There is the GoH (Guest of Honor), who is often a professional author.

At LosCon 2009 there were 2 GoHs: Steve Barnes and Tananarive Due. Another

professional level guest often represented is the Artist GoH. In 2009, it was Tim

Rickhard, an artist, illustrator and comic book creator. Then there is the FanGoH, an

amateur who is active in the maintenance of fandom. In 2009, it was CM, who has

chaired numerous conventions, and served as an officer for his club many times. At other

conventions the FanGoH might be recognized for his fanzines or other activities.

Most panels consist of three or four people, one of whom is the moderator. The moderator is expected to keep the panel focused, to provide a few questions to keep the discussion going, to prevent speakers from monopolizing the session, and to coordinate the discussion with the audience. Unlike academic conferences, these are not papers that are being presented; rather, they are opportunities to share information. Sessions are usually scheduled every 1½ hours, so people have time to talk and then travel to another activity. At LosCon 36, I counted over 100 of these panels scheduled at this convention. Topics included how to write and publish your own work, what is happening in real science, how to make costumes, classic literature, contemporary literature, politics, religion, and what is happening in the media. Speakers included authors, editors, publishers, producers, directors, artists, actors, musicians, scriptwriters, game developers, historians, computer geeks, doctors, physicists, chemists, rocket scientists, engineers, and fans.

Table 2. Diversity of subjects at panels.

Category	Number of Panels
Themed/Steampunk	4
Writing	21
TV, Movies & the Web	15
Science	9
Fandom (History & Culture)	12
Costuming	5
Art & Music (mostly filk concerts)	11
Making SF movies	4
Social Science (economics, anthropology, religion, linguistics)	9
Anime & Manga	11
Books & Classics	13

Eighty-one percent of the survey participants listed panels as one of the things they did at conventions.

Because I am interested in fan culture, I had suggested panels about that subject. As a result, I was put on a panel called "Fan Unity and Diversity." I was also given the opportunity to moderate a round table on fan culture, which helped me get some input on my dissertation topic. Somehow, I also ended up on a panel called "Geek Chic," and, I assume based on my degrees, one on using clear language when you write and another on studying. I also helped at a workshop for Children's Programming, on "How to Build a Space Station." At all of these panels, I answered some questions, learned some interesting facts, heard some stimulating ideas, and enjoyed myself thoroughly.

You Can Take Some of It With You

The Dealers' Room

Panels can be interesting, informative and fun. However, a person can only sit in meetings for just so long. Eventually, it is time to shop. Fans, as can be seen in Figure 15 below, have enough money to have an economic impact. Everyone likes the occasional souvenir, but many fans call themselves collectors (such as Catherder and California Fan). To satisfy these needs there are the dealer and art rooms. According to my survey, 92% of fans intended to visit the dealers' room during the convention. At LosCon 2009, I counted about twenty merchants. Figures 7 and 8 provide a small picture of the available items in the dealers' room. In order to get into the dealers' room, a person must have a convention badge prominently displayed. A friendly volunteer sits at the door to check for these as a person enters the room. Of course, there are always people who sell books and comic books at a convention. At LosCon 36, I counted six such booths. Some of the

books were the newest ones by people like the GoHs. Others were used or out of print.

There were also three merchants who specialized in CDs (such as sound tracks from

genre movies) and DVDs. Additionally, there was a booth for posters and one for prints

and photos. Another merchant specialized in fannish toys, especially tribbles and stuffed

microbes.

Figure 7. Dealers' Room. Front to back on right are scarves, toys, hats, then books near
the door. Across from the hats is a jewelry dealer.

The easiest way to display art in fandom is to wear it. In the Dealers' Room,

members could buy a variety of items for their garb (from skirts to jackets to hats) from

three or four different merchants. Costumes are not just to be seen, they are need to be

appreciated by all the senses, so they are created from a variety of materials. One booth

specialized in leather, fur, and feathers, while another blended its own perfumes. Fans can

often be recognized even in street clothes because they wear normal clothes with fannish

items on them. For example, my own collection of Con-wear purchased at previous

conventions clearly illustrates my biases. For example, one of my t-shirts includes a

dragon sitting on a treasure trove of books with the label "Book Wyrm" on it, and another

features a dragon sitting on a pile of books with the words "So Many Books … So Little

Time." Then there was the dealer who prints fannish slogans, jokes and emblems on t-

shirts, polos and book bags. In 2009, this dealer had 14 designs specific to this

convention. To round out the apparel section, there was a merchant that sold purses. I also

counted three jewelers, many of whose designs included items of fannish interest such as

fairies or stars.

Figure 8. From the Dealers' Room to the Art Show. On the right and in the center are two book booths that fans pass on the way to the Art Show. In the back, on the left, is the entrance to the Art Show. The gentleman seated is the door guard who is doing a badge check. Behind him you can see a man standing at the bidder registration table.

The Art Show

The Art Show is also a popular spot for collectors; indeed, one respondent added

art collecting as an activity to the survey list. Three-quarters of survey participants had

already viewed or intended to view the Art Show. Much of fannish art is painting, drawing or printing. Subjects may be fantasy characters such as dragons, fairies and unicorns, or science fiction's interpretations of distant planets or alien life. One very popular art form is feather art, where an artist uses a feather as his or her canvas; often the subject of the painting is either a real or fantasy animal. (Theresa Mather, who was mentioned often by the fans as a favorite creator of the genre, often displays her feathers at LosCon.) The most popular animals for genre art seem to be felines or raptors. Jewelry, pottery, and quilting are also commonly used media in convention art shows. Wood was a popular medium in 2009; there was an artist with beautifully turned wooden bowls, and another artist who had crafted wooden rockets. Photography was represented by an artist who had made digital pictures with fairies and another person who had made collages of autographed photos featuring characters from *Heroes, Buffy,* and *Young Frankenstein.*

Art at conventions is often subject to judging. There is an expert judging committee for the official awards. Traditionally, the most recent Rotsler Award[28] winner has an exhibit at LosCon. Children's Programming at LosCon usually arranges a tour of the art show, after which the children award their own prizes to the artists.

Much of the art at a convention is sold by auction, although not all of the art is for sale. Artists are given bid slips upon which to write their names, the title of the work, the materials used, and a minimum bid. Then, there are three lines under this information on which bidders can put their name and bidder number. To get this number, fans provide basic information at the art desk about themselves--name, address, telephone number and/or who can pick up their artwork for them if their bid wins on a given item. That last bit can be very important, since the artwork is often not distributed until Sunday morning

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[28] For more information on this award see http://www.scifiinc.org/rotsler/.

and many fans may already be headed for home. If the bid sheet fills up, the art piece automatically goes to a traditional voice auction, including an auctioneer who may tell jokes or chivy bidders to raise their bids. (In 2009, since I was preparing for the party, I was unable to be available for the end of the art show or the auction the next morning.)

Costuming

Fans do not just alter their physical environment with decoration and art. Costumes also help set the tone for a convention. The first costumes were worn to WorldCon in 1939 by Forrest Ackerman and Myrtle Jones, who attended as a star pilot and a woman from the movie by H.G. Wells (1936), *Things to Come*. According to the International Costumers' Guild (2005), "[b]oth of them created quite a stir among the somber gathering of writers, artists and fen (plural of fan), and injected a fanciful, imaginary quality into the convention's overly serious nature" (para. 2). Clothing helps create or set the tone of a convention. Costumes that are worn as everyday dress are called hall costumes. They are designed and made to be seen up close. They have been described as looking like something one would wear every day, something that had just come out of a fictional character's regular closet. Furthermore, these costumes are not usually designed to be entered into competitions. In Figure 9, the fan is dressed like the title character in Del Toro's 2004 movie, *HellBoy.* This is the character's working uniform, what the character would wear every day. Although this costume looks complicated, it is easy to move in and represents a "normal" look for that character.

Figure 9. Example of a hall costume – HellBoy

More elaborate costumes may be shown off in the Masquerade, a consistent source of theater for fandom. In this contest, costumers (or their models) are judged not only on the costume but also on how it is displayed or performed in three to five minute vignettes, which are often set to music and narrated by a master of ceremonies. These are costumes are works of art, usually worn for performances only. The master of ceremonies for the event is also required to keep an audience entertained by telling jokes (usually bad) if the show stalls. Because of the complexity of the Masquerade, this competition is often done in teams. Competitors follow general rules, including leveling guidelines[29], with regional variations around the world. In 2009, my team was unable to compete because it was helping me set up the Thesis Complesis party. However, Figure 10 shows our team at a previous competition. This costume set is of a futuristic carnivale in which

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[29] The guidelines published by the International Costumer's Guild can be found at
  http://www.costume.org/documents/fairness-26-05-2006.html.

we are play people dressed up as the five elements. The costumes and masks were seeded

with cool lights so that we lit up when the stage went dark.

Figure 10. Researcher and her team at Masquerade. WorldCon 2000 (ChiCon). The costumes and masks light up. I am the one in white.

Other Activities

So what's a fan to do if there is no panel of interest, and he or she has already

done the shopping? This year because I was on so many panels and preparing for the

survey party, I was unable to fully participate in several of my favorite events. However,

I did stop by the autograph table to chat for a few minutes. At several conventions, I have

stood in a line waiting to get a book by a new favorite author signed. Personally, I have

one hard-backed book signed by each of my favorite authors; these are then put

somewhere safe and not read. (I buy a cheap paperback copy that I can carry in my purse

for reading.) These signings can be an important event at the convention because they

give fans (especially newer ones) an opportunity to interact with favorite authors in an

organized and safe environment. At previous conventions, I have seen people stand in

line carrying a copy of every book written by an author. At LosCon 36 the GoHs, Steve

Barnes and Tananarive Due, were scheduled to sign autographs, as well as Larry Niven, Jerry Pournelle, and Barbara Hambly. Of course, it is not just the big names who are autographing their books; several lesser know authors, including those who have self-published, might request a place at the autograph tables so as to market their books. For example, the editor of an anthology based on a collective world building endeavor, the Orion's Arm Universe Project, was using the allotted autograph time to market the book.

Another place I did not get a chance to visit was the Anime Room. To be honest, I still do not really understand anime or manga. Manga is a storytelling/drawing style popular in Japan. It is read by all ages from children through adult, and covers a wide range of genres including action, science fiction, and romance. Anime is the moving version. My son tells me what I should see or read. The only one I recognized on the schedule was *Cowboy Bebop* (2008); I would have liked to have caught it; they were going to run all 14 episodes on Saturday night. Unfortunately, since it was running at the same time as the survey party, I missed it.

<center>*Children's Programming*</center>

There is a portion of the convention that many fans rarely, if ever, see. If you do not have children or you do not volunteer to work with the children, you have no reason to go to the room reserved for Children's Programming. Yes, it provides babysitting services, but it is more than that. The person who coordinates it has a degree in early childhood education, and she spends hours every year recruiting volunteers to make presentations to the kids. There are a variety of activities for the youngest fans including art projects and storytelling, to name a few. I enjoy helping a rocket scientist friend who conducts a panel for the little ones annually on "How to Build a Space Station." The talk

<center>103</center>

he gives is about 5 minutes long, since his audience ranges in age from 3 to 10. He tells them what scientists have to consider if humanity is going to put and keep people in space. While he is speaking, I set out Styrofoam shapes (mostly balls, cones and flat pieces), craft sticks, and markers. Then he and I help the children with the hot glue guns and the hot wire cutters as the children design their space objects. Some of children have been attending this panel for several years, so they had had time to plan their newest space ship. Many of the children have very involved plans and ideas, including ideas about engines, defense and habitats for humans and animals. The results of some of their efforts can be seen in Figure 11 below.

Figure 11. Results of the Children's Programming project: "How to Build a Spaceship"

Filking

I only sort of missed the filking that year. The filk room was across the hall from the room for Children's Programming; so I got to hear some of the music as it came out of the room, but I did not have a chance to sit and listen. Also, a couple of filkers came over to entertain the children. What, you might ask, is "filking[30]?" The obvious answer is a typo that someone made while writing an essay about folk songs that appeared in a fanzine. The term came to mean a contemporary song set to a traditional tune. This is not completely accurate, however, because there is a lot of completely original filk music as well. It has been played at science fiction conventions since at least the mid-1940s (Gold, 1997). A good example of a filk song is "Witness's Waltz" by Leslie Fish about watching the space shuttle landing. It has a cheery, singable tune with a chorus the following chorus:

> Twelve thousand, half-million, million and more
>
> Picknicking out on the warm-water shore
>
> Nobody notes that we're always at hand
>
> To watch all the space-ships that take off and land

The youtube video (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J_GciXA-6Ag) includes scenes of shuttle launches and landings, as well as pictures of the people who cheer the ships on.

Doing Our Part

Conventions are fun. Many times you also learn something. But conventions are not just about satisfying yourself. Part of conventions is doing for others; there are multiple opportunities for doing so at LosCon. The easiest way to do so is through

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[30] Two good articles on filking are http://fanac.org/Fan_Histories/filkhist.html, by Lee Gold, and http://www.featherlessbiped.com/filk/ by Lee Jacobs.

volunteering at the convention. People need to organize the programs, like the Masquerade or the panels. Someone needs to guard the doors to protect the art. Someone needs to set out the food in the Green Room or the ConSuite. Someone needs to provide the programming for the little ones. Actually, lots of someones are needed for all these jobs. Of those who took the survey, more than 20% volunteered for the convention. This did not include members who staffed fan tables, helped competitors repair their costumes for the Masquerade, decorated spaces for parties, or did presentations for either the children or for the regular convention attendees.

Fandom does spend time creating its own world; however, it is quite aware of the outside world as well. LosCon has a tradition of working to help with real problems in mainstream society. For example, three participants wrote that they would be at the annual blood drive, which is held at many conventions because it was an important issue to one of the greatest science fiction writers of all time, Robert Heinlein. Another participant wrote that he or she would be participating in the Toy Drive which LosCon holds every year because the convention is so close to Christmas. Finally, one survey participant wrote that he or she would be involved in the Charity Auction, which in 2009 was raising money for MS because many fans are afflicted with this disease.

The End

It is the very last thing. It is not in the program. It is held in the late afternoon of the last day of the convention. Veteran fans know to look for it and will bring new comers, or sometimes will find it on their own because the ConSuite is the last place where anything happens. In 2009, my travel schedule actually allowed me to attend the Dead Dog Party.

The art show auction was over, the last panelists had led their discussions, the closing ceremonies had been held, and there was nothing left to do but pack up and clean; however, after three days of convention, people were tired of working or playing. So, they straggled up to the ConSuite to say goodbye and eat the last of the food, often bringing what was left in their ice chests to share. As my contribution, I brought the last of the cheese (probably a couple of pounds of Swiss) and the crackers that were left over from the party. At one level, it was melancholy because it was an extended goodbye. On the other hand, people were already planning their next visit or discussing which convention they would be attending next.

CHAPTER 5

A STRANGER IS A FRIEND YOU JUST HAVEN'T MET YET[31]

We were making the future […] and hardly any

of us troubled to think what future we were making

-- H.G. Wells, *When the Sleeper Wakes*[32]

The title of this chapter is representative of the fact that I met many people while I was doing this study. They were people I had seen at panels, spoken to briefly at a fan table, or sat next to at the Masquerade; however, they were not people I really knew. Through this project I met them, and they went from being strangers to people who appear on my Facebook chat list. The line from Wells' novel was chosen because it illustrates the fact that while we are all making a future, it is the essence of fandom to want to take the time to think about it.

The first section of this chapter will sketch a picture of the group that is fandom using the results of the survey during the convention. The second section is offered mostly in the words of the conversational partners themselves to give them their voice and to allow for the fullest description of the fans for the reader.

The Demographics

During my research, I was unable to find any contemporary studies about the population who make up fandom. There is some evidence that a few early fans tried to do some of this research; but that was in the 1930s, so it is now difficult to find. Therefore, I present my own data. Two hundred forty-eight people filled out the survey. Any person who was a member of the convention was eligible to do so. Anyone who came into my

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[31]From *Star Trek: Voyager.* Uttered by Captain Katherine Janeway in "Fair Trade," Season 3, Episode 13, Aired January 8, 1997.

[32] (p. 68)

hotel room (room party) was given the survey information, survey and consent form. It is impossible for me to tell how representative of the convention as a whole this study was, since I had no control over who attended. For more information about the survey methods and philosophy see Chapter 3.

The first two questions on the survey addressed attendance at science fiction related conventions. The first question included any conventions, which would include WorldCons, anime or comic book conventions, and other local or regional conventions. The second question, on the other hand, asked solely about attendance at the convention sponsored by the Los Angeles Science Fiction Society. Survey participants ranged from people who had never been to a convention before to three fans who have never missed a LosCon (which would indicate they had been regularly attending conventions for at least thirty-six years. Figure 12 shows how many conventions of all kinds participants had previously attended. Almost 2/3 of the respondents said checked "Too Many to Count." Apparently, people tend to be regular participants at these events, a factor that contributes support to my argument that fandom constitutes a stable and definable subculture.
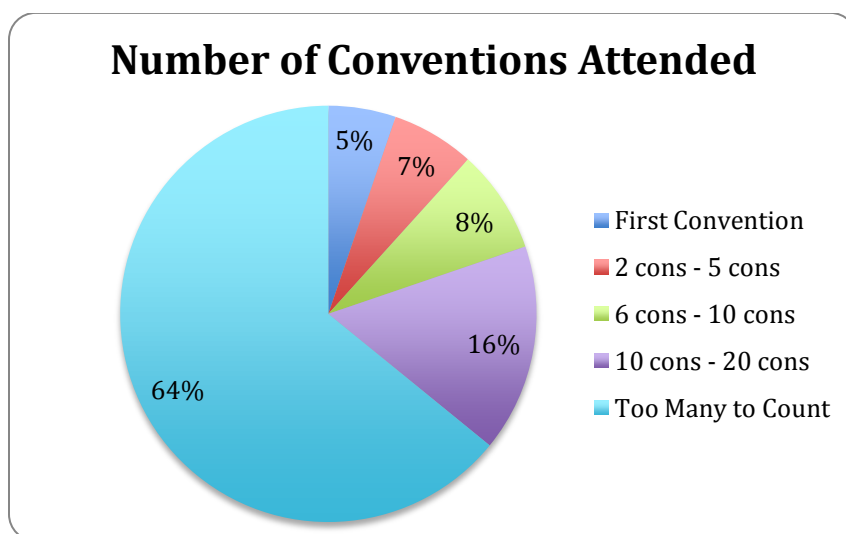
Figure 12. How many science fiction related conventions have you attended?

Figure 13 is more focused. It asked respondents how many LosCons the participant had attended. Interestingly, 26 representatives were long-time convention goers, responding "Almost All; but almost as many were first time attendees. Three participants had attended all 36 LosCons. It should be noted here that some fans took advantage of my suggestion that they "Please feel free to make other comments, corrections or additions as you see fit!" (Appendix L) as they adjusted my questionnaire to suit their needs. I had assumed that more than 20 would fall under "Almost All;" instead some people added a 20-30 category, which was the same size as the "All of them" category.

Number of LosCons Attended
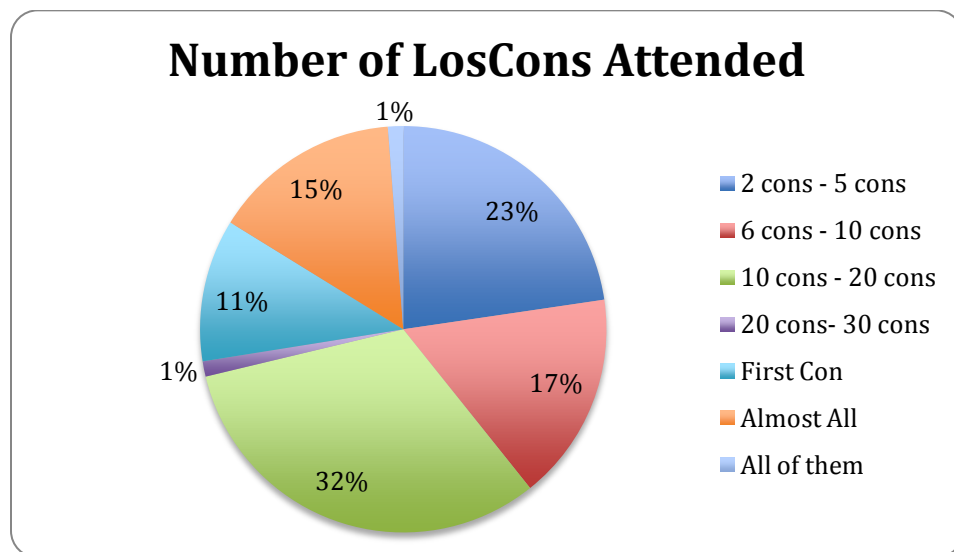
Figure 13. How many LosCons have you attended?

The next few questions about demographics were designed to address some of the myths about fandom. For example, it has long been assumed that the majority of fans were male. This was almost certainly true of early fandom. However, women have been coming into their own in speculative fiction as readers. In this survey, 118 (48%) respondents said they were male while 114 (46%) stated they were female; 16 respondents did not answer the question. This near equality does not appear to hold true

however for a question asking about the creators of the genre, where only about 25% of those named as favorites were women.

Other stereotypes also needed checking. As mentioned in Chapter 1, in a song about being online, Brad Paisley described a fan as working at a pizza restaurant and living with his parents spending his time on the computer, strongly implying that fans are loners who are neither well educated nor well employed. At least in this study, as seen in Figure 14, this myth has been debunked. First, the majority of the respondents had attended college. I included in this category respondents who had completed some kind of certificate program, since they did not claim a traditional 4-year degree. Additionally, 23 (10%) of the respondents claimed to have terminal degrees; this included 17 doctorates (in anthropology, social psychology, physics, literature and history, as well as 2 who were ABD), 3 lawyers, 2 librarians, a doctor and a dentist, and several respondents who did not specify.
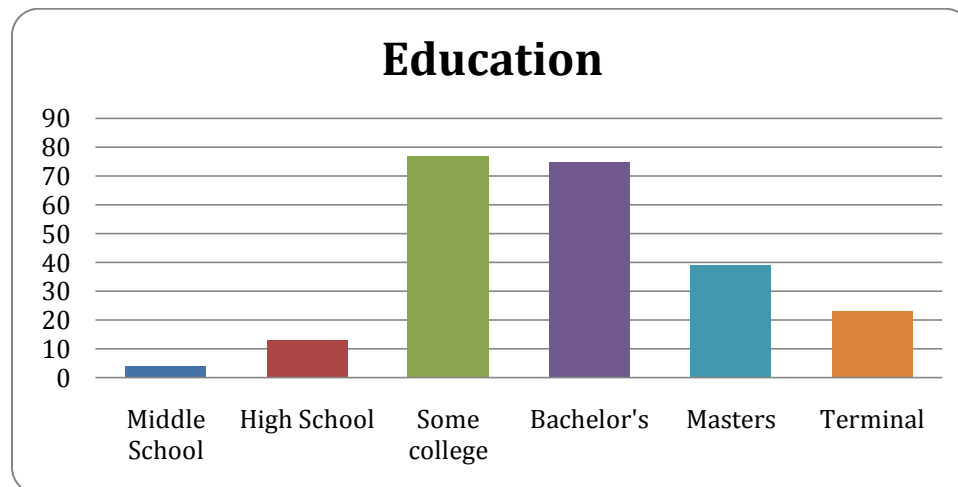
Figure 14. Highest level of education completed

As would be expected of such a highly educated group, most members of fandom are not in lower economic brackets. As can be seen in Figure 15, well over half of fans

live in middle-class households. Only 28 (13%) of the respondents circled under $25K, some of these were students or young people who were just starting households of their own. This, by the way, was the question that had the highest number of persons (26) who chose not to answer the question.
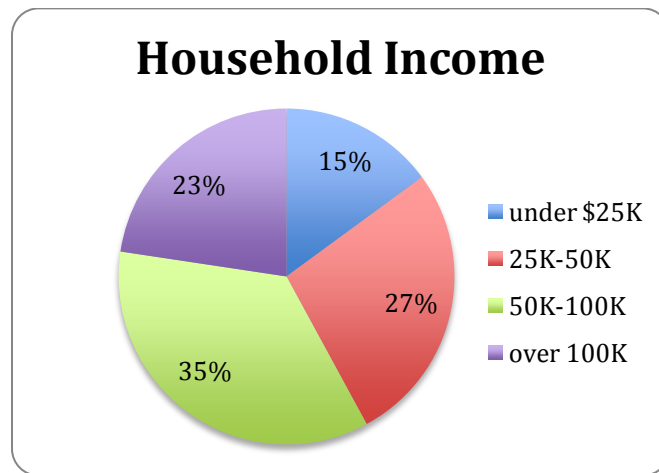
Figure 15. Income level per household (in US $)

Fans do not appear to live alone in their basements as implied by the Paisley song. They come to conventions to be with people. Further, many of them have friends outside of fandom according to Figure 16[33]. Although the largest category (122 respondents or 53%) checked "More than half my friends are fans," my conversational partners said this was based on common interests (such as space industry), not simply because they were fans. Similarly many respondents (58 respondents or 25%) had friends who read science fiction or went to related movies although they did not participate in fandom. It should be noted, however, that 19 survey respondents (8%) had only fan friends. At a hypothetical other extreme, only 14 fans (6%) circled an item stating that they had to "drag their friends to a genre movie, " a clear sign of having non-fan friends.

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[33] See Appendix L for exact wording of responses.
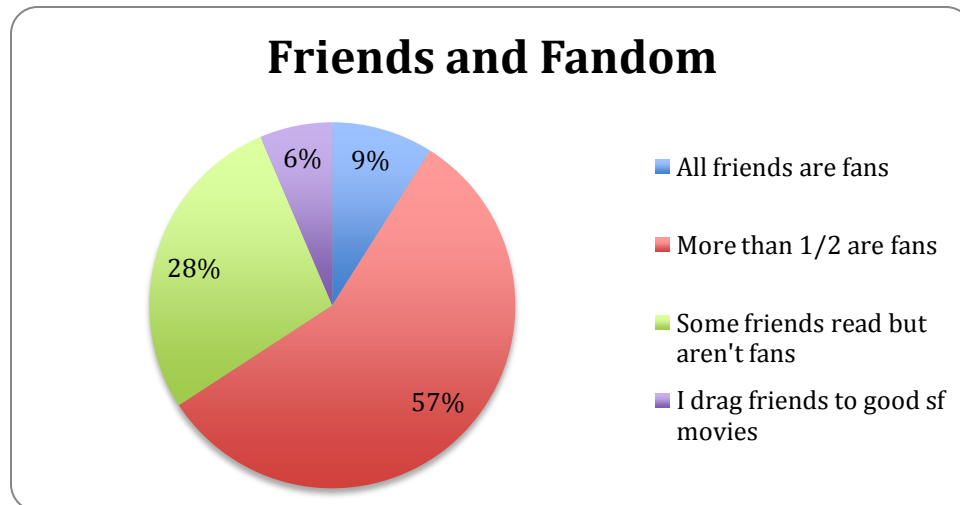
Figure 16. Fans and their friends.

One of the images of the Brad Paisley song does appear to have some truth behind it; the singer portrays the science fiction fan sitting at a computer, and fans do seem to use computer technology. As can be seen in Figure 17, fans often describe themselves as computer literate. Over 80% of fans who answered this questioned indicated they were fluent in software or hardware, or considered technology essential to their lives.
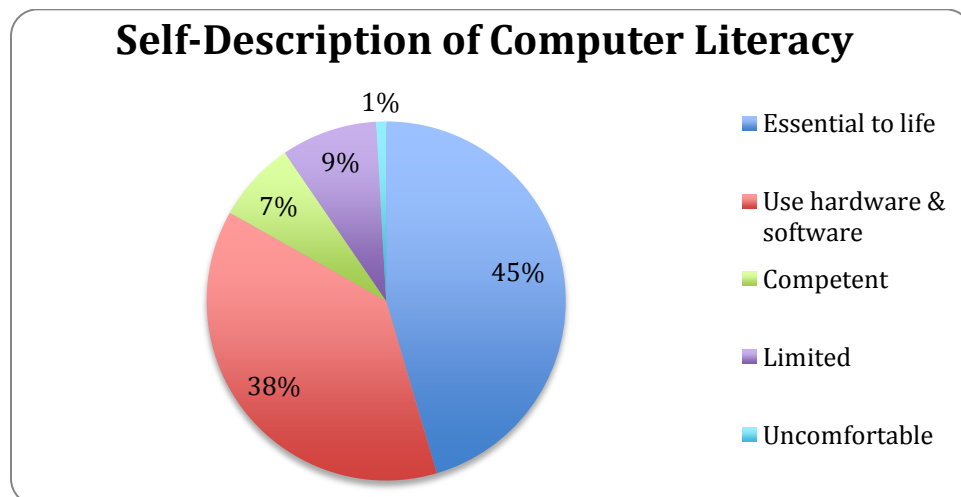
Figure 17. "How would you describe your technological literacy?"

A belief among fans that I was not able to refute is that that fandom is graying. Figure 18 confirms what convention organizers and attendees have suspected for a long

time; we are not attracting as many young people as we used to. Of those who responded

to the survey, 123 (54%) reported that they were over 45. The next lower bracket asked

for, 35-45, had the next highest percentage of respondents, 48 (21%). The other 3

categories, under 18, 18-25 and 25-35, added up to fewer than those who had responded

for the 35-45 category.
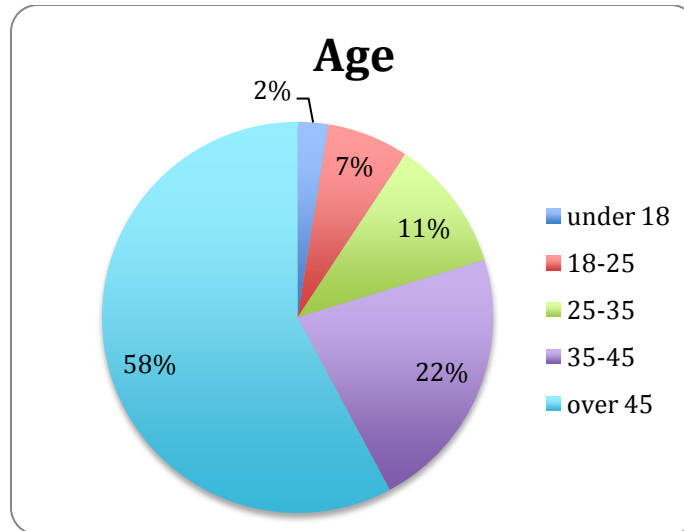
Figure 18. Age of participant at time of convention

Voices

The above data gives a broad view of the group that is fandom in general. But

fans are not some kind of unitary entity. They are individuals. The following section is

about some of those individuals. References to survey respondents in this section refer to

answers that I received only on paper so I did not speak to these fans; many of them are

anonymous. On the other hand, the interviews I had with my conversational partners

lasted at least half an hour and were often longer.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, there were preplanned questions for our

conversations; however, I usually only used them when my conversational partners ran

out of things to say. A brief description of some of my participants follows in Table 1. All

of my conversational partners interacted with the three main types of text: books, movies and television. Additionally, they all visited the four most commonly attended activities at the convention, namely the panels, the dealers' room, the art show, and room parties. The activities that have been listed for them were gleaned from our conversations.

The Conversational Partners

Table 3. Introduction to Conversational Partners

User Name/ Gender	Genre Interests/ Other Interests	Types of Text Interactions	Convention Activities	Volunteer Activities
The Researcher/ Female / Gail Bondi	Science fiction first, fantasy, steampunk/ History, education, animal rights	Reads academic texts, writing dissertation	Costuming, masquerade, room parties	Panels, children's programming, fan table
Big Man/ Male	Science fiction & fantasy/ History, martial arts, xenobiology	Reading & writing fan fiction, blogging, reads & writes professional journals	Costuming, Masquerade	Panels, fan table
California Fan/ Male	Mostly science fiction, comics/ History, politics	Comics, reads & writes professionally	Meeting authors	Panels
Catherder/ Female	Science fiction & fantasy/ Space, technology, living green	Blogging, reading fan fiction and technical manuals	Masquerade	Fan tables, outreach
Edradour/ Male	Science fiction & fantasy / History, philosophy	Writes web pages for work, reads academic texts		Panels
Jacob/ Male	Science fiction & fantasy	Anime	Born & raised in fandom. Has worked as dealer.	Gopher, security
Josie/ Female	Science fiction & fantasy / Editing & writing, martial arts	Blogging, works with academic texts professionally	Room parties	Panels, fan table, room parties, charities
Jourdain/ Female	Science fiction & fantasy, media fan /Psychology	Academic texts (recent college grad)	Panels, parties	Convention organizer
Mr. XY/ Male	Science fiction & fantasy/ Social issues	Reads & writes in professional life	Panels, Hanging out, Room parties	Shows, panels
Thaddeus/ Male	Science fiction & fantasy/ Mystery, space, astronomy	Has sold genre related artwork	Panels, room parties, masquerade, art dealer	Panels, fan table, room parties,

Finding the Genre

Some fans were born into fandom. One of my conversational partners, Jacob, told me, "[my] parents met through fandom so I was conceived and born into a fannish household." He adds "I was surrounded by the fannish culture and society so much that all of it kind of melts together. The books and the movies and the TV shows and the people and the events all kind of roll together into one thing for me." One of the survey respondents wrote that she was a "4th generation fan and [had] been working conventions for over a decade."

For other fans, there was at least interest in science fiction at the parental level. Interestingly, the science fiction influence, at least in this study, came through the fans' fathers or other male role models. This was true for both male and female fans. For example, Mr. XY said. "My father read F & SF, so I always remember fantasy and science fiction books around the house." Jourdain's father also "read science fiction and watched all the sci fi television shows such as *Star Trek* and *Outer Limits* and *Night Gallery*." Jourdain, a self-described media fan, added "I guess I got my first tastes of watching sci fi from behind the couch while my dad watched it." Although Jourdain's father did not attend a convention until he went with Jourdain, he did bring home Jourdain's first science fiction book from the library, an anthology of short stories. Science fiction novels were also in Catherder's father's library, as he "had some Robert Heinlein around."

Other fans found their first genre books on their own in the library. Edradour read his science fiction in the library. "I was at school. I was bored during the lunch break. I would go into the library and read, and I came across science fiction. And I decided that

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was the kind of book that I really liked, so I read it." Other fans just loved the library. For

Big Man, libraries were a source of stability. "I came to love the libraries because I

discovered early on that if you found the same book, it was the same book. It sounds self-

evident now, of course, but it was a revelation to me as a child." Additionally, Catherder

gleefully told me that she got her first library card at the age of four because her mother

got tired of having her daughter use up the book limit on her library card.

<center>Interactions with Traditional Text</center>

Fans are usually avid book readers, and it came as no surprise that 82% of survey

respondents reported interacting with books. More telling, perhaps, is how they

responded to questions about books. Most of them could tell me which book it was that

first turned them on to the genre. Many of those books were the Heinlein juveniles, which

may be why he was listed most often as the fans' favorite creator.[34]

These fans have turned their love of texts into collecting; they have, according to

Warner (1969), been doing it since the 1930s. At least two fans, Catherder and California

Fan, referred to themselves as collectors. According to Catherder, "as soon as I got a

place of my own I started collecting. And I had one heck of a collection." Big Man,

apparently, didn't wait until he moved to his own place; he started buying books when he

was very young. When I asked him to describe his earliest memories of reading and

writing, Big Man responded, "[I remember] my parents buying me books. They were

both always happy to let me have a few extra cents (!) to buy a book or an interesting

magazine, even at an early age." California Fan could even tell you how many comic

books and books he owned because he had cataloged them. Typical of collecting fans,

upon graduation he had asked for a trip to his first WorldCon as a gift. In 1971, he went

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[34] For the fans list of favorite creators (at LosCon 36), see Appendix Q.

to Boston where he says "I had a grand total of $200 on me. I spent it all on old magazines and comic books. That started my collection too." Another fan claimed to own "over 30,000 SF books."

<center>Television, Movies and Other Media</center>

It is apparent from Appendix Q that the fans' love of books does not mean that reading is the only way that fans interact with the genre. Their favorite creators are spread across many media forms, the most popular of which (other than books) were movies and television. While there was no obvious pattern in fans' movie watching habits, *Star Trek's* creator, Gene Roddenberry, was one of the most frequently named creators of the genre. Interestingly, although many fans' initial foray into genre television was either *Star Trek* or *Lost in Space*, Jacob, a younger fan, named *Power Rangers* as his first television show.

Books, movies and television are the most common forms of media with which fans interact. But as can be seen in Figure 19, many other types of media are also popular with fans. Question 7 of the survey asked respondents to tell me with which media did they interact? All of the subgenres of speculative fiction were mentioned in all media forms: art, literature, comics, music, film, television and computer games.

<center>119</center>

Texts Fans Interact With
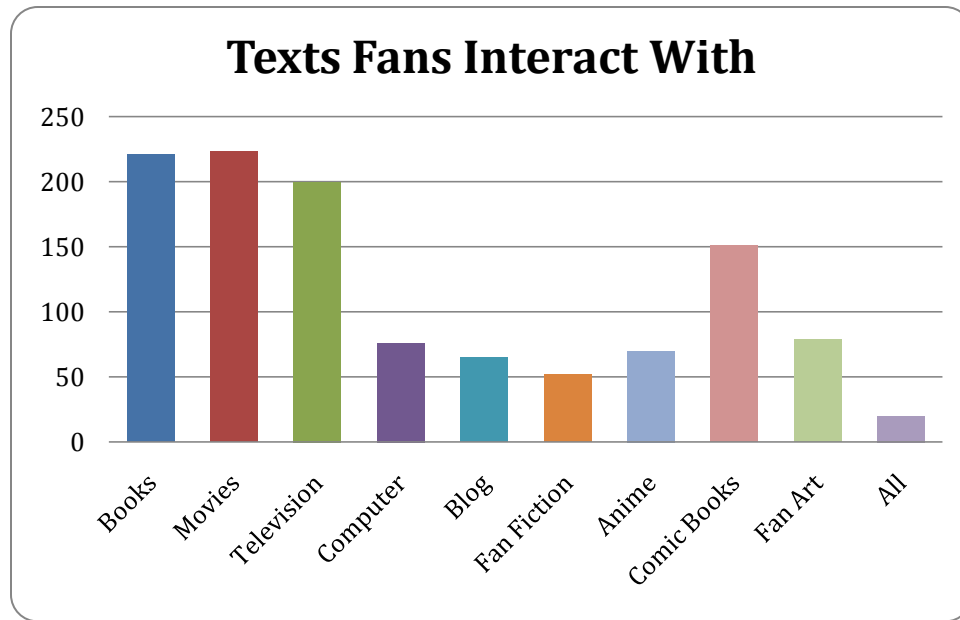
Figure 19. The question reads "With which media do you interact?" then provides several choices as well as a space for asking respondents to name possible other categories.

Overall, fans interacted with a wide variety of media; however, one fan claimed to only read books and another claimed his interaction with the genre was limited to computer gaming.

Other Genres

When I asked fans what they read, their answer could perhaps be best interpreted as "everything." Yes, they read science fiction and fantasy, with both (46%) being the predominant answer on the survey, although science fiction (44%) was significantly more read than fantasy (10%). This was also reflected in the fans' choice of genre creators, which predominantly lists science fiction across all media types. (See Appendix Q for more details). However, fans do not just read across media and across the speculative genre; they also read across a variety of genres, both fiction and non-fiction, and for pleasure and professionally. Jourdain who recently completed her bachelor's degree, was taking advantage of her summer break to read a Charlaine Harris vampire novel, while

Catherder was reading a sword and sorcery novel, *Best Served Cold* (Abercrombie, 2010) and Edradour was reading a Tad Williams fantasy while looking forward to *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (Kundera, 1984). History and politics also seem to be popular with fans, which is understandable since alternative history is a recognized and popular subgenre of science fiction; for example, Josie had just completed *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* (Chabon, 2007). Books about modern science, actual history and contemporary politics are also on fan bookshelves. For example, at the time of the interviews, Catherder was reading Diamond's (2006), *The Third Chimpanzee: The Evolution and Future of the Human Animal,* and Edradour had just finished a book about the history of the Krupp armaments manufacturer. Additionally, books approved by the Academy are almost on fan reading lists; California Fan had just recently read Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*.

<div align="center">Fans and the School Experience</div>

In general, fans have been good readers most of their lives. As mentioned earlier, Catherder had a library card at 4. Thaddeus remembers knowing the alphabet before he started kindergarten. Edradour remembers his mother teaching him to read when he was "extremely young;" and claims that "all the reading instruction I remember was before I went to school." This did not, however, translate into success at school. Some fans, it would appear, were slow to learn the rules of the school game. California Fan, who now holds a terminal degree, describes his confusion:

> And then I went to kindergarten, which was my first formal school. I was kind of a fish out of water. Having already read stuff which I didn't know was two years ahead of my time, they'd say, "Read this book," and the books were See Jane run.

See Dick, Spot or whatever. And so I'd be through the book in 30 seconds, which

would get me in trouble. I always got sent to the principal's office. I hated school.

I was very much an underperformer in school because I didn't know school was

for education. I thought school was just punishment for being young. I almost

flunked the second grade. I almost got kicked out of school in the fourth grade.

California Fan was not alone in his hatred for the institution of school. Edradour, who

also holds a terminal degree, also struggled with early labels:

"In my primary school, the school decided I was stupid and treated me as stupid

the whole time I was there without really paying any attention to what I actually

did. When I got to secondary school, I discovered if [I] did well on a test, they

treated me like an intelligent student. The only way to be treated as stupid was to

not do well on the tests."

Fortunately both of these fans figured out the school game early enough to reach their

educational goals. Catherder was not so lucky. She specifically states "my grades were

so low, I wasn't engaged." Catherder goes on to explain that this disengagement, poor

grades and socio-economic difficulties resulted in her being unable to take interesting or

useful classes later in her education when she decided she wanted to be an engineer.

Jourdain attributes her not doing well in school to her stubbornness. When I asked her to

clarify a statement she had made about not getting into writing, she responded "Strange

huh, since I like to write fan fiction! Actually I like to write what I want to write and not

what teachers told me to write. I wouldn't get over that stubbornness until high school.

So it wasn't that I couldn't write, it was just that I wasn't really interested in writing

about my summer vacation. Fortunately, Jourdain had a high school teacher who let her

write what she wanted. Jourdain wrote a Monty Python typed story and discovered she could write well. Now, as a recent college graduate, she claims she "can write a mean paper in proper APA format, let me tell you!"

Like Jourdain, most fans are not just passive consumers of text. They are creators as well. Writing is an essential part of literacy and historically most fans are regular practitioners of writing; only the tools they use may have changed over time. As noted in Chapter 2, fans originally found each other through letter writing or through fanzines, which they still read and write. However, they are now also using digital media to do these things. Instead of paying for postage, many fans now use email. Instead of publishing fanzines, fans publish blogs or write fan fiction. Two participating fans are currently working on movie scripts. Another fan makes anime music videos. Interestingly, some fans denied they were writers because they only wrote poetry. Jacob told me he did not write because he could not write in cursive; he typed everything instead.

Panels are for both teaching and learning. Mr. XY likes the "futurist and social science panels most." In turn, he has done panels on legal issues in science fiction and on the Internet. Big Man goes to panels that are useful to his profession or his hobby interests. He also sits on panels because, as he put it, it makes him "happy to be able 'to pay it forward', [by helping] authors and aspiring authors and fans better understand the things [he] knows about." Catherder describes panels well:

> I like the panels at them [conventions]. They have a way of making you […] re-examine your assumptions, ones that you thought you were already sold on. I like panels because sometimes you can get some really good panelists and they're

sitting there talking back and forth and they're doing the same thing to themselves [questioning their assumptions] and you get to join in.

Fans go to conventions looking for information. Experts go to them to share their knowledge and experience with other experts. This sharing is what attracts many fans to conventions; they get to meet and interact with their favorite experts (e.g. authors, artists and actors) directly. As Big Man, who regularly corresponds with writers like Jerry Pournelle, Steve Barnes and Elizabeth Moon explained, "It's an interesting thing about fandom; there's less of a separation between the 'makers', the authors and actors and artists, and the 'fans' than I have observed in other enthusiast groups, such as mystery conventions." Similarly, Jacob told me "One of things that I really, really cherish about fandom is [its] close knit nature […]; how it's been that way for so many years. A lot of professionals started out as fans and as such, for the most part, they tend to be very, very in touch with their fan base." For example, California Fan still remembers meeting Isaac Asimov in the elevator at a convention.

I asked fans what they saw in the genre they both produced and consumed. The answers to this question were pretty uniform—it gave fans a chance to look at the future. Thaddeus saw it as a way to anticipate future science after being introduced to astronomy and space exploration by a distant relative: "It was the height of the Apollo program […]. From then on, I wanted to be an astronaut and devoted most of my energies toward that goal. Science fiction served as a way to vicariously experience space travel (and with living in space) before I could do so myself." An anonymous fan echoed this sentiment in the survey when he or she wrote "I'm passionate about space and sci-fi is inspiring and encouraging." Catherder adds "I always looked at science fiction as being a way to taste

the future before we're forced to live it." Josie, more practically, tells us science fiction is a means to explore social and political issues.

The Social Factor

Many fans were not happy in typical child environments. They often did not fit in well at school. Thaddeus's story is not unusual,

We moved around and changed schools a great deal while I was growing up […]. All of this moving around meant that my brothers and I were always the outsiders and never quite fit in. I couldn't keep friends for long because we were always moving. So I tended to be very shy and introverted.

Indeed, loneliness is an urban legend for fans, who often use a well-known line: "It is a proud and lonely thing to be a fan." It might be true for some, but it is not true for many fans who have found like-minded people through fandom and appear to have pushed away the loneliness. Fans have proven to be very social animals. On the survey, participants were asked about their friends in fandom. To use Josie's words, "I select for people with my common interests in general, of which SF is one. I think this is a general human social thing where we seek out people with whom we have something in common." Big Man would probably agree with this statement when he points out,

I think that SF fandom, like any enthusiasm, tends to gently nudge you in certain directions. You're at the SF convention, so you meet certain people, share their enthusiasms, connect with them […]. That's time you're not spending meeting people at, say, college football tailgate parties […].

Many fans used words like "acceptance" and "socialization" when they described the community. For example, Edradour told me that "I really didn't have any friends at

that time. The people in the convention treated me like I was someone who was worth knowing rather than someone just to be tolerated." California Fan used science fiction's fans and literature to overcome his shyness. "I was a very shy person growing up. […] But you know when I realized that there were other people that liked me for what I was, […] I mean science fiction as a literature probably helped me assimilate into mainstream American culture." At the same time, he adds "[o]n the other hand, I have a lot of friends who don't belong to anything. I just have friends. And if they happen to come from the science fiction community, or if they come from politics or sports whatever; it doesn't matter." Having adapted to American culture, California Fan now talks to anyone.

Like California Fan, Jacob (who was home schooled) used science fiction fandom as a way to develop his social skills.

> I never went to [traditional] school a day in my life, so when I say that most of my socialization came from fandom I really mean [close to] 90% of the interaction I had with people period was through fandom; That was where I developed my social skills, and where I gained the confidence with people to be able to actually apply myself socially outside of fandom and do well. That air of acceptance is really helpful, to know that you've got that behind you wherever you're going.

Having a group like fandom to support him enabled Jacob to go out into the general community. When I called Jacob, he had just recently moved away from his Los Angeles base to be with his girlfriend and look for a job.

The concept of tolerance was also discussed by my conversation partners. Fans talked about the breadth and variety of people included and the subjects that were discussed among fans. Within fandom, Jacob tells us,

"There's a strong sense of identity among fandom wherein fans recognize and gravitate toward each other even if they don't share the same fandoms […]. The person [who] is all into CosPlay and loves everything anime but has never touched Magic the Gathering or picked up a Heinlein book can sit there and converse and get along with the person who has been reading Arthur C. Clarke since [the classics] were first published."

Jacob's statement is also an interesting insight into the intergenerationalism of fandom. He has deliberately mixed activities connected with younger fans such as games like Magic the Gathering, which was introduced in 1993, with something only an older fan could have done—read Clarke since the early 1950s.

Edradour, on the other hand, elaborates on the breadth of interests in fandom, as he comments on the ability of fans to discuss a broad range of non-genre topics.

There was no one I could sit down and have a conversation with, [whereas] in fandom I can sit down and find myself in a conversation about quantum mechanics and matter/anti-matter reactions and what that means. Or acausality in physics. I can talk about cultural issues. I can talk about politics and the historical development of various American political tendencies. I can talk about rationality, the nature of rationality. How people think and why they think what they think.

This willingness to talk about almost anything, in a generally intellectually active environment, is what appeals to many members of the fan community.

Fandom's Place in the World

Fandom has two terms that describe lifestyle and attitudes toward fandom. One fan did write that "SF is a way of life" on his or her survey. There is, however, an opposing but equally accepted theory that we do what we do because it is fun. The official terms are "FIAWOL, FIJAGH - Fandom is a way of life, or Fandom is just a [goshdarn] hobby, depending on your point of view" (Franson, 1962; also Clute & Nicholls, 1993). How fandom affects a fan's more traditional life is probably related to one of these two positions. Fans who participated in this study took both sides.

For example, when I asked Big Man if science fiction had affected his educational or professional decisions, he wrote "not especially. My father was a much greater influence on my professional choices than SF was." In another instance, an anonymous fan acknowledged that she is not as involved as other people when she wrote on her survey "I am a lifelong, but not hardcore fan. I read/write SF & Fantasy, watch movies & TV shows, but go to conventions only when they are convenient, although I enjoy them when I go."

Pierre told me "I first encountered science fiction at age 7. I became active in fandom in 1980. I married within fandom. We are raising our children within fandom" Similarly, a fan who is also apparently a merchant wrote, "My first con was in 1975 (age 15). I attended cons for over 20 years before I turned 'pusher' to support my addiction. When I was coming to cons as a non-dealer, I volunteered, went to panels, etc, etc. I still attend some cons when I'm not working them as a dealer"

Fandom, however, appears to be more than just a group of people in the minds of fans; it is, according to most of those I interviewed, a subculture that separates it from the

mainstream. According to Mr. XY that difference is in its attitudes toward knowledge and literacy,

> it has its own language and cultural norms. Fandom values intelligence and the ability to master technology. Most fans seem to believe that society has been made better by science and technology. Fandom values literacy. Even if it doesn't lead to monetary benefit.

Thaddeus also sees fandom as different from the mainstream; however, he claims the difference is in the subculture's tolerance of difference.

> we tend to be more accommodating of physical defects, the handicapped, non-standard lifestyle choices […] as a whole than most people in the general public […]. These qualities and others tend to make fannish folk very recognizable to one another and fairly easy to distinguish from non-fans in society.

Addressing a related question, fans described how fandom was different from the mainstream. The answers to this question ranged along a continuum from no difference to extremely unflattering (to the mainstream) differences. That the question itself is of interest to fans is illustrated by the fact that I was asked to sit on a panel called Geek Chic, which focused around the question of whether or not being a geeky science fiction nerd was becoming cool. On one side, Jourdain felt that "Sci fi fandom isn't really different from the mainstream, especially since you have quite a bit of it out there in the world of television and movies" HBO's number one show [*True Blood*] is about vampires. ABC' s *LOST* has been nominated for 12 Emmy awards."

Although Jourdain's opinion seemed to be the minority view at this convention, at least among those I interviewed, it is not extremely different from that of many fans. Big

Man stated "I think there's more overlap than there used to be. This may be part of the emergence of a more broad based "geek culture", or the increasing influence of SF movies (in particular) on general pop culture and discourse." Perhaps moving slightly farther toward separation would be Thaddeus' statement that "fans tend to think 'outside the box' more when it comes to the way that people interact with one another, with society in general, and with our social institutions." At the farthest end was another fan that simply told me that he chose fandom because he could either talk to interesting, open people, or join with the mainstream where he could talk to dull people or obnoxious ones.

Having introduced the group and some of the individuals in these chapters, I discuss some of the general themes that emerged during my observations at the convention and during the conversations with my partners in the chapters that follow.

CHAPTER 6

LOGIC IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM, NOT THE END[35]

42[36]

--Douglas Adams

At the beginning of many of the classes I teach, I start with the line, "I have a question," pause, pause, pause. Then I add something like, "I need to know why you are here and what you expect out of this class." If, however, anyone in the room yelled out "42," during the pauses, I know I have a fan in class, because all fans know that 42 is "the ultimate answer to life, the universe, and everything" (Adams, 1979). The only problem is the laboratory was destroyed before someone discovered the question. This paper elicits more questions than answers; but some conclusions (at least about the culture at this convention and its literacy) can be drawn. The following sections describe some of those conclusions and implications that can be drawn from them.

Fan Culture and the Mainstream

Fandom has long seen itself as "other" or different from the mainstream. This study shows that, in a way, it is; it does demonstrate many aspects of a cultural group. This is made most apparent by the fact that the fans see themselves as an identifiable group called fandom. This fact was reiterated over and over again during the interviews. Almost all of the fans I interviewed identified fandom as a subculture, even if they disagreed about how separate that culture was from the mainstream.

One of the characteristics fandom shares with other cultural groups is art. Fandom itself is based on an art form, literature. Without the printed word, there would be no

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[35] Uttered by Mr. Spock in *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country*
[36] Adams.

science fiction, fans or fan culture. However, fans have expanded beyond a single art

form into as many types of art as are demonstrated by mainstream cultures. Film has also

always been closely associated with science fiction. Visual arts, as seen at conventions,

include painting, drawing, and photography, as well as three-dimensional art forms such

as sculpting and modeling. Music is also part of fan culture. It is usually recognized by

the mainstream when it is attached to film, but fandom also has its own folk music,

known as filking.[37] Live theater is less common in fandom; however, it has been done.

One popular theatrical is Nicholas & Strader's (2000) *The Klingon Hamlet.* The

Masquerade is the most common type of live performance, but I have seen radio plays

and one acts presented at conventions as well. In addition to the high culture arts there are

also dozens of craft arts such as pottery, weaving, fashion design, jewelry design, and toy

making.

Another characteristic of the culture is the language. As readers of this study may

have noticed, fan culture has a rich vocabulary dedicated to its attitudes (*FIAWOL*,

FIJAGH), activities (*gafiate*), art (*filking*, *manga*) and science (artificial intelligence).

Additionally, some plot devices, such as warp drives, suspended animation, and flip-open

communications devices have been used often enough to become part of fan knowledge.

Some of the terms developed for science fiction, such as cyberspace and spacesuit, have

bled over into mainstream use. Other terms such as *prozine* and *fanzine* are used mainly

among the fannish population. While fandom does not have a language of its own, it does

have a vocabulary, which is mostly understood by members of the community.

Fan culture also includes distinctive apparel. According to Bacon-Smith,

"[s]cience fiction fashion […] displays denotative signs of the specific interests of the

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[37] A more thorough definition is provided in Chapter 4.

wearer" (p. 35). In other words, fans can tell what subgenres another fan enjoys by the clothing he or she wears. For example, a fan wearing a 15-foot long scarf is a Dr. Who fan, while fans of *Star Trek* might own a Starfleet uniform or have the wig to dress as a Klingon. Some clothing, such as t-shirts, is the same as that worn by the mainstream, except instead of bearing an alligator or supporting a charity run, it will feature a dragon or support space exploration. These items might not be noticed if they were worn in public, as they often are. Other costumes, such as those that would normally be seen on aliens or in alternate universes, are more obvious. This type of garb not only identifies fans to other like-minded people, it is also a way that fans stake out their territory. While conventions are often held at mainstream hotels, the space occupied by fans can be identified by the number of people wearing fan clothing or paraphernalia. Although, convention badges label the wearer as included in the community, the more obvious costumes are useful in telling outsiders where they are.

For many fans, the difference between fandom and the mainstream is how fans think of sociopolitical issues. As was discussed earlier, fans use the genre to explore political, social, economic, moral, and scientific issues. The books and other media often serve as springboards for conversation about important topics at discussion panels and room parties. It is expected, in this culture, that participants in the discussion will be open to debate and tolerant of other points of view. California Fan stated that although he tends to be at one end of the political spectrum, he has had many reasonable conversations about politics as well as less controversial issues with those at the other of the spectrum. It is this belief that fans are more open thinkers than regular people that gives them the impression that they are different from the mainstream.

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On the other hand, contemporary fans also recognize that the separation between them and the mainstream is not as wide as it was in the days of First Fandom. The mainstream now admits to enjoying the genre in movies and television. This popularity is most obvious in blockbuster movies like at Cameron's (2009) *Avatar,* which has made over $2 billion worldwide. While a science fiction film has yet to win a major Academy Award, some good genre films, such as Nolan's (2010) *Inception,* have at least been nominated for Best Picture.

Additionally, at a panel I was asked to speak on called "Geek Chic," many fans were pleased with the improved depiction of nerds by television. Although many of the shows featuring "geeks" were not science fiction, former "weirdos" such as computer analysts are often now depicted with respect; years ago, these characters would have been hidden in the basement, if they were portrayed at all. For example, Abbey from CBS's *NCIS* may be portrayed as a little strange, but she is also an integral, beloved member of the team. Similarly Fox's *Bones* is about a bunch of squints (the FBI officer's term for geeky scientists) who solve crimes using forensic science while having normal problems like relationships with family members, friends, and lovers.

<div align="center">Fans and Literacy</div>

There is one cultural value or norm obviously shared by both fandom and the mainstream: education. Survey results from the Thesis Complesis party indicate that fans are a highly educated group. Almost 60% of the respondents had completed some type of college degree. Another 33% of the fans of who took the survey had taken some college courses. Despite the painful start described earlier by some fans, it would seem that fans

have learned to play the academic game well. Part of that game is literacy skills, and fans are multiliterate.

<div align="center">*Traditional Literacy*</div>

It has already been established that fans are readers. Further, they are generally good readers. Krashen (1993), while studying readers in general, commented that because science fiction was so intellectually demanding the most advanced readers in school read it. Additionally, as was established in the interviews, fans read across a wide variety of genres including the social sciences, the classics, and science. For example, Catherder was reading *Networking for Dummies*. Additionally, an anonymous fan wrote on his survey that although he was competent at computer use he preferred to read about technology through rocketry. Further, since several fans hold doctorates or other terminal degrees, they are arguably skilled at writing using traditional literacy.

<div align="center">*Computer Literacy*</div>

Some fans disagreed with the survey's conflation of technology with computers. One survey respondent wrote "the above question seems to equate technology to computers. There is a great deal of technology that is not computer related. I do use that also." He also indicated that technology was an essential part of his life. Over 80% of the survey respondents indicated they used a variety of software and hardware routinely or that it was essential to their lives. Another 9% claimed they were competent with technology but preferred to use other media where possible.

Fans use technology in a variety of ways. Personally, many of them use computers for communications, using tools like email and social networking such as Facebook. Recreationally, fans play online games including MUCKs and MUDs. They

also use the computer for amateur writing projects like blogs and fan fiction. One person listed fan media creation as one of his or her fannish activities. Professionally, computer technology is essential for many fans. Some fans are computer engineers, programmers or research scientists. Others, such as lawyers and academics, use computers for their professional writing. One fan uses his computer knowledge to write web pages for the students in the classes he teaches. Science fiction literature wrote about modern technology before it was invented. Fans appear to have embraced it since it has come into existence.

Visual Literacy

Gee and the New London Group contend that modern pedagogy needs to acknowledge the value of new forms of literacy which are based in the digital age. These literacies are often based on images. Reading these pictures requires making complex inferences using historical and cultural knowledge. Consider, for example, the opening sequence of the television series *Enterprise,* which begins with a shot of the Earth from space. It then shows a series of images including *Kon-Tiki*, *The Spirit of St. Louis*, a NASA space shuttle and designs of the future which tell the back story of the television series *Star Trek* or trace the path of humanity's exploration of its environment. Fans have had long practice interpreting pictures of both the real and the imaginary.

Related to this is the fans' ability to read comic books. Comic book authors create and use icons to represent persons, places, things or ideas. McCloud (1993) tells us that these icons "demand our participation to make them work" (p. 59). In other words, reading comic books is not just looking at the pictures; it requires interaction with the frames, text and icons in order to be able to understand the creator's message. But it is not

what is on the page that is necessarily the most important. The space between the panels is called the gutter and it, according to McCloud, "plays host to much of the magic and mystery that are at the very heart of comics. Here in the limbo of the gutter, human imagination takes two separate images and transforms them into a single idea" (p. 66). If the popularity of comics implies an understanding of them, then many science fiction fans are fluent with this type of visual literacy. Over half of science fiction fans, according to the survey, interact with comic books or graphic novels.

A final example of fandom's visual literacy is found in its appreciation of design, especially in costuming. As discussed earlier in this chapter, fans use clothing to convey ideas. Like comic books, fan garb uses icons to tell a much larger story. For example, one of my t-shirts, mentioned earlier, depicts a dragon on a pile of books. This simple image contains multiple meanings: a) the dragon is a European dragon because it is labeled with the old English term for the mythical beast, wyrm; b) fans who have read Tolkien or know about dragons know that they collect treasure in a huge pile upon which they sleep; c) the dragon in *The Hobbit* is named Smaug; and d) those who read the news know that he is the seventh richest fictional character in the world according to the *Forbes* (2011) "Fictional Fifteen". The image on my shirt has the dragon sitting on a pile of books, which tells people I meet that the greatest treasure of all is found on the printed page. Visual literacy allows us to quickly read and interpret long messages in very condensed packages.

<center>Fandom as an Affinity Group</center>

It was suggested in Chapter 2 that fandom could be seen as meeting many of the criteria of an affinity group as defined by James Gee in *What Video Games Have to Teach*

Us About Learning and Literacy (2003, pp. 192-193). Of the six characteristics that Gee lists, fandom shows important aspects of five of them.

1. Members of an affinity group bond to each other primarily through a common endeavor and only secondarily through affective ties.

This appears to be true, in that only some fans are related in ways other than fandom. Instead, most fans joined the group and remain in it because they have common interests with other members. These interests are either personal, such as a mutual love of a form of the genre (i.e. a television show such as Jourdain's interest in *LOST*), common hobbies (i.e. Catherder's book collection), or real world concerns (such as Thaddeus's interest in space development).

2. The common endeavor is organized around a whole process […] not single, discrete, or decontextualized tasks.

Fandom is maintained by a variety of activities many of which are interrelated or contribute to the functioning of the community as a whole. These tasks may be officially defined or related to a position such as that of the Party Maven who provides structure and support for a popular convention activity, the room party. Fans may also support the community by volunteering for a variety of positions such as Security for monitoring elevators or ensuring that alcohol is not served to minors. Or the tasks may be less official and self-chosen by members, such as hosting or helping with one of the room parties. They might fulfill one of these tasks on one convention night, then take over a different task on the following evening.

Similarly, group members interested in costuming perform in the Masquerade or provide support in presenting the show, such as a providing assistance in the Green

Room, acting as stage ninjas[38], helping with lighting, sound or camera work, or helping with set up and tear down of spaces used at the convention center. Additionally, as required by Gee's definition, there are no rigid departments or boundary lines, since people who work behind the scenes at some conventions may later be part of the show at a different event. Further, the boundaries between convention activities are also fluid in that costumers may sit on panels, volunteer at fan tables, sell merchandise, or host room parties.

> 3. Members […] have extensive knowledge, […] members must be involved with many or all stages of the endeavor; able to carry out multiple, partly overlapping functions; and able to reflect on the endeavor as a whole system, not just their part of it ….

In the case of fandom, the endeavor is an understanding of the genre, which encourages the reading of many texts, often in overlapping ways. Fans' interaction with a variety of media demonstrates their multiple literacies. Jourdain's love of television science fiction combines with her knowledge of traditional text, allowing her to enjoy reading media tie-ins. She then moves from a passive enjoyment of these tie-ins by creating her own in the form of fan fiction. Her stories then become a part of the genre.

Gee tells us that extensive knowledge means that there are no narrow specialists (p. 192). The choices that survey participants made when asked to name their three favorite creators of the genre demonstrate the breadth of their interests and familiarity with the many aspects of the genre. Examples of these choices, based on selected survey responses, are provided in Table 3.

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[38] Stage ninjas (volunteers completely dressed in black) are used to get performers, who may have restricted vision due to costume needs, on and off stage.

Table 4. Examples of the breadth of interests held by members of fandom

	Creator	Subgenre	Creator	Subgenre	Creator	Subgenre
Fan 1	Haiyao Miyazki	Anime	George A. Effinger	Cyberpunk	James Cameron	Movies
Fan 2	Douglas Adams	Satirical SF	JRR Tolkien	Classic Fantasy	Stephanie Myers	Urban Fantasy
Fan 3	Jim Butcher	Urban Fantasy	Michael Whelan	SF Illustrator	Jack McDevitt	Hard SF
Fan 4	JJ Abrams	TV: Star Trek & LOST	Carrie Vaughn	Urban Fantasy	Neil Stephenson	Cyberpunk
Fan 5	Joss Whedon	TV: Spec Fic	Andre Norton	YA: SF	Steven Brust	Fantasy
Fan 6	William Gibson	Cyberpunk Founder	JRR Tolkien	Classic Fantasy	Jane Austen	Academy Classic
Fan 7	Steven Spielberg	Academy Awards	Stephen Hickman	Artist	Leonardo Davinci	Polymath Genius
Fan 8	Isaac Asimov	Classic SF	Rod Serling	TV: Spec Fic	Terry Pratchett	Comic Fantasy

4. Members each have intensive—deep and specialist knowledge in one or more areas. Members may well bring special intensive knowledge gained from their outside experiences and various sociocultural affiliations.

First, fans are valued for a wide variety of intensive knowledge. A wide variety of specialists attended LosCon 36, including an historian who has recently published a book on 1950s French science fiction writers and a costumer who presented a panel on crocheting fingerless gloves. Additionally, some fans are respected for their wide knowledge of the genre, so they are asked to sit on panels that discuss books that should be read or movies that should not be remade. Further, many fans are valued for the knowledge they bring from the outside. According to the program guide, outside specialists providing their expertise at the convention included an engineer, a chemist, an astronomer and an editor, to name only a few.

5. Much of the knowledge […] is distributed (spread across various members, …

and their tools and technologies […]) and dispersed ([…] networked across

different sites […]).

Fans routinely use each other as data sources. Creators (or aspiring ones) use

panelists and other fans as sounding boards for ideas and/or as fact checkers for story

plots or environments. For example, in 2009, a pair of martial artists gave demonstrations

on how to kill people with swords and knives. By providing fans with the opportunity to

see or handle replica weapons and showing them how they are correctly used gave

potential creators information they needed to make their stories believable.

The tools of fandom are found in the various ways it stores text, either as print or

electronically. Although the most common tool for fans is the book or magazine, of which

there are literally tens of thousands, most fans also readily access the Internet for

information. All the facts and ideas considered by science fiction have probably been

written down somewhere and can be accessed if you know where to look. Additionally,

many of these ideas have also been stored visually in the various art forms fans use

including drawing, painting, costuming, photography, videography, and filking.

The knowledge base of fandom is widespread. As mentioned in Chapter 4,

fandom meets around the United States and around the world. All of these conventions

look more or less the same, so that fans seeking information know how to look for it at

different sites. Further, fans using their implicate knowledge of the genre have some idea

about which conventions they should seek out for different kinds of information. For

example, fans of British television would probably know that more of what they wanted

would be available at a convention called Gallifrey (the home planet of Doctor Who, a

British science fiction character) than at one called Anime (a Japanese art form) Los

Angeles.

Fans access this knowledge or each other via the worldwide web or the Internet.

There are online groups dedicated to many different types or aspects of fandom. For

example, Catherder participates in a chat group focused on the Adams' (1979) *Hitch*

Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy. Fans are also skilled online researchers. To quote one fan,

"the Internet is my *it*h." Although the expression is crude, the sentiment is clear: if the

information exists this fan can use the web to find it.

<div align="center">Science Fiction, Reading, and Learning Theories</div>

I need to take a moment here to repeat my definition of reading and text. The New

London Group calls traditional text "mere literacy" and argues that the modern definition

of literacy and how it is taught must include technology and multimedia. I would add that

if by reading one means collecting data or experiences, then all reading is learning and all

readers are learners.

As was seen in Chapter 4, many fans have mastered the education game,

successfully maneuvering their way through the system to obtain degrees conferred by

the Academy. However. based on the stories fans tell, this was often in spite of the

education system, not because of it. As students, many of them fought with the system,

learning through what they chose to read, not by taking part in the texts in the ways

designated by the system. What turned them into readers and kept them reading was the

fact that they discovered books they loved and wanted to read. Krashen (2006) has done

research showing that it is having access to books they want to read that helps make

students good readers. In schools this is called Sustained Silent Reading, a program in which

> students read essentially whatever they want (within reason!), including comics,
> catalogs, manuals, graphic novels, and magazines. There are no book reports, no
> assignments, and no grades. And students aren't required to finish their selections
> if they don't want to: they're free to choose something else to read. (Krashen,
> 2006, para. 3)

It works because children practice and keep practicing. Gee (2003) would call this the Practice Principle, in which "learners get lots and lots of practice in a context where the practice is not boring" (p. 208). Edradour talks about finding science fiction in the school library. Catherder talks about hiding her books inside the ones she was supposed to be reading. These fans developed their own SSR programs. Jacob was more fortunate. Because he was homeschooled he did not have to go somewhere else or hide his reading to do SSR; his education was a guided voluntary free reading program.

Fans like Edradour and Catherder were at least reading books, which are an acceptable medium to the Academy. However, as the New London Group points out, the key to reading does not lie with books alone. Instead, its members argue that modern literacy must include other forms of text that involve technology and multimedia. Understanding these texts may enhance rather than replace the comprehension and use of more traditional text forms. For example, several studies have shown that comic books are an effective way to get students, especially boys, into reading. First, research suggests that comic books help move boys from basic interpersonal communication to academic language, possibly because they contain more rare words than regular language. Perhaps

more importantly, boys who read more comic books read more kinds of other books for pleasure (Ujiie & Krashen, n.d.). This leads back to Gee's Practice Principle. It should also be noted that in science fiction fandom, which has a high interaction rate with books (82% of those surveyed in the present study said they read books), many of its members (54%) also interact with comic books.

I would suggest that this theory could and should be extended to writing. As Jourdain points out, being allowed to write something in the style of *Monty Python* showed her that she liked to write, which translated into writing fan fiction, and then transferred into her graduating from college after learning to write papers in good APA style. Gee (2003) might relate this to his Transfer Principle, in which learners are given the support to transfer learned skills to other areas and problems.

Combining these two ideas in the classroom might result in students developing stronger skills in both reading and writing. If students were allowed to choose their reading, they might read more. These students might then also be motivated to write more material, and to do so more creatively, because they were interested in what they were doing. Fan fiction, for example, would give students reasons to write.

Multiple Intelligences and Learning Styles

Science fiction is well suited to two other educational theories—multiple intelligences and learning styles. Gardner (1999) originally proposed seven intelligences, four of which are easily adapted to science fiction readers (or learners). Learners with a high logical-mathematical intelligence appreciate the patterning of science fiction. In contrast, those with high linguistic intelligence learn well from written and spoken language. Furthermore, the popularity of filking (science fiction folk music) appeals to

learners who have a high musical intelligence. Finally, those with a high bodily-kinesthetic intelligence literally become or build aspects of the genre through such activities as costuming, modeling, art, role playing, and character creation. Similarly, learners with strong visual learning styles easily access science fiction through movies, television, art, manga, anime and comic books. Hyerle & Yeager (2007) contend that "our ability to learn visually is greater than any of our other senses" (p. 3). If this is so, some of science fiction's most often used media are also the ones from which fans are most likely to learn.

Gee (2003) adds another intelligence to Gardner's list--material intelligence--when he tells us that "thinking, problem solving, and knowledge are 'stored' in material objects and the environment" (p. 210). This, he says frees learners to engage their minds with other things and then combine those thoughts with stored information to achieve powerful effects. Fans use the environment created by a convention to find information and generate something new, be it an idea, story concept or cultural position.

The concepts of multiple intelligences and learning styles, combined with the fact that science fiction is read through a variety of media, matches well with Gee's learning principles, which state that learning takes place best when there are multiple ways to learn and when meaning and knowledge "are built up through various modalities (images, texts, symbols, interactions, abstract design, sound, etc.) not just words" (Gee, 2003, p. 210). These sign systems that appeal to different modalities and learning styles represent Gee's Semiotic Principle. It appears that if teachers want to teach reading, letting students read science fiction (or other genres of their choice) would be one way to make the process accessible and enjoyable.

Learning, Genre, and Intertextuality

That genre reading is useful for learning to interpret text and think critically becomes apparent when considering the definitions and concepts behind genre and intertextuality. Gee argues that recognizing the design and design principles of a genre is core to learning. As noted above, genre readers read through volumes of text. As they read, they develop an understanding of the styles and forms of the genre. Roberts (1990) states that "[t]here are dozens—perhaps hundreds—of traditional designs for each genre, and often the first problem that we readers must solve is that of determining which one or two or more of these traditional designs we have before us at the moment" (p. 119). He adds that "science-fiction readers love stories that challenge them with the kinds of design difficulties [a] novel provides" (p. 123). For fans, interpreting text in its many forms becomes a puzzle to be solved.

As noted earlier, fans are not limited to traditional text when solving these genre puzzles. Instead they use and appreciate multiple sign systems (e.g. images, words, actions, symbols, and artifacts) across the genre. According to the survey, few fans interact with only a single sign system. Although there were a few participants who claimed to interact only with books or computer games, they were exceptions to the rule. In general, science fiction fans interacted with at least two of the forms the survey listed. It is interesting to note that survey respondents added over 25 other forms of the genre to the list that was included in the survey.

Fans use the previous knowledge acquired from interacting with all these types of text to build intertextual relationships; they understand that "any one such text [is] in relation to others in the family" (Gee, 2003, p. 209). For fans, this intertextuality is

readily apparent because of the many access points to the genre. A wonderful example of this understanding of intertextuality is *Galaxy Quest*, which Jacob called the "best *Star Trek* movie ever made." Although the movie, which parodies many common plot devices fused in pulp magazines or B movies, is enjoyable on its own merits, experienced fans will recognize and appreciate the humor of the film. Another good example would be my son in his early reading. We had seen the movie *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace,* then we purchased the novelization by Terry Brooks (2000). My son came to find me, and show me the word "naïve" which he did not know but had heard used in the movie. For fans, the associations between texts can be made because there are so many ways to make connections.

Conventions and Embodied Learning

What often turns background knowledge and collected data into deep learning is embodied experiences. Gee tells us "[t]exts are not understood purely verbally (i.e. only in terms of the definitions of the words and their text-internal relationships to each other) but are understood in terms of embodied experiences[…]. Learners move back and forth between texts and embodied experiences." These embodied experiences include activities, talk, dialog, decision making, and problem solving. From its earliest history, fandom worked according to this principle when it members started communicating through letters to the editor, then through fanzines and finally at conventions which can be seen as the continuous embodiment of the genre. Although conventions are based on the texts, there can be no convention unless there are experiences that embody them.

Fandom also represents another important aspect of Gee's (2003) learning principles: the affinity group. As demonstrated above, fandom contains many of the

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characteristics of an affinity group. At conventions, fans are presented with opportunities

to participate in the group and share in its knowledge and culture. This, in turn, leads to

another of Gee's principles—the Explicit Information On-Demand and Just-in-Time

Principle. As discussed in Chapter 4, conventions are information dense. Importantly, that

information is provided when a fan needs or wants it. There are no prerequisites for

attending panels or activities. There are, however, ways to assist fans who are newly

interested in the genre, including fandom as a whole, in acquiring knowledge. For

example, panels are provided on modern literature and classic literature; or perhaps a

literature fan might want to experiment with a sub-genre by attending a panel on anime or

filking. What information and at what level it is wanted or needed is determined by the

individual, not by any authoritative system. Interestingly, even though some activities,

such as the Masquerade, have formalized structures for separating novices from masters,

it is the participant that chooses the designation, not the rules or experts. Additionally, in

keeping with Gee's Discovery Principle, the sources of information avoid overt telling as

much as possible. Instead, interested members are encouraged to explore concepts and

find information for themselves while sifting through advice provided by other more

competent members of the group.

Conventions are also a place where members of fandom are allowed to participate

in the affinity group in a meaningful way, which is yet another of Gee's learning

principles. As implied in Chapter 4, there are fans in leadership positions, such as the

Convention Chairperson and the Party Maven. There is also a Program Coordinator.

These positions are usually held by people with some experience in the convention arena.

However, there are also plenty of opportunities for other people to participate. Many fans

(such as Jacob and Catherder) have acted as gofers, staff, or security at conventions. Expert volunteers often sit on panels. Furthermore, many fans volunteer with other organizations at the convention, such as those that represent other fan groups or other conventions. According to my survey, over 21% of fans intended to volunteer for some activity. Since many opportunities to volunteer are offered during the convention, even the newest members may participate if they so choose.

Central to the concept of learning at conventions is that meaning/knowledge is "distributed across the learner, objects, tools, symbols, technologies and the environment" (Gee, 2003, p. 211). I would add to this list other members. No one person is an expert on all the aspects of fandom or its genre. Instead, different members of the group act as repositories for information which is then freely shared with other members in either formal (panels) or informal (parties) settings.

<center>Science Fiction and Modeling</center>

The above examples and stories are evidence that science fiction and the practices of its fans are superb avenues to the skills and values of the mainstream. Rather than inhibiting the acculturation of people into society as whole, science fiction has provided the skills fans need to succeed in the mainstream. These skills, which include critical thinking, information seeking, and problem solving, are developed according to modern educational theories. Students who read science fiction while they were in school ultimately translated these skills to the requirements of the Academy, enabling them to become respected professionals and valued members of other communities. Science fiction fandom is a model of what literacy and learning can be in the mainstream.

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CHAPTER 7

TO THEM AND THEIR POSTERITY WILL WE COMMIT OUR FUTURE[39]

> *They will continue the voyages we have begun, and journey*
>
> *to all the undiscovered countries, boldly going where no*
>
> *man... where no *one* has gone before*[40]

The reason I chose this title should be apparent to this study's readers. This study is only a very small piece of what needs to be done in the research about fans and fandom. Like the genre behind the fans being studied, there is no one book or study that answers all the questions about this subject; it will take dozens, if not hundreds of studies to explore the phenomenon of fandom. With that being said, however, this study does present some evidence that will be of value in the classroom.

As the title implies, a central theme of this study is the concept of multiliteracy. This concept implies a change in pedagogy, "one in which language and other modes of meaning are dynamic representational resources, constantly being remade by their users as they work to achieve their various cultural purposes" (New London Group, n.d.). Fan interests and interactions with text make it apparent that fans use a variety of literacies and literacy skills. However, during our conversations, it became apparent that fans were neither allowed to use these skills in the classroom nor were they taught to use them effectively or efficiently. The next few pages discuss the types of literacy most common to fans, with some implications for the classroom.

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[39] *Star Trek 6: The Undiscovered Country*
[40] *Star Trek 6: The Undiscovered Country*

Traditional Literacy and Sustained Silent Reading

As emphasized earlier, the majority of fans are masters of traditional text. However, they often achieved this not by reading approved, assigned texts in school, but by voraciously reading the texts they assigned themselves. Krashen (2006) calls this free voluntary reading, which in the schools became the Sustained Silent Reading program. Unfortunately, a major government supported study by the National Institute for Literacy (2006), *Put Reading First*, implies that there is no value to such a program in the classroom. My research presents evidence that students and fans who read what they want to read, read a lot. Further, they often end up reading and learning about what the government and the Academy want them to read: science, technology, engineering and math. Similarly, it appears that many fans who did not become scientists or engineers did proceed to acquire high levels of education in other fields. This would strongly imply that Krashen is correct; students need free reading time in the classroom.

This, in turn, carries another strong implication. Students must have access to books that will interest them, not just books that institutions want students to be interested in. This would suggest that school and classroom libraries need to be filled with books including media tie-ins, comic books, and graphic novels, as well as works of genre literature and classic literature. This would indicate that the authorities in students' lives, such as teachers and media specialists, need to know about these things themselves so that they can make appropriate purchases and recommendations to students, potential fans and/or reluctant readers. In the past, fan groups have opened their doors to educators; they must continue to do so if they wish to make more fans and/or make positive contributions to the American classroom.

Computer Literacy

Fans, it seems, are also strong writers. According to the survey and interviews, fans write professionally and recreationally. They do it using computers. They write blogs, fan fiction, web pages, legal briefs, academic journal articles, and email using the computer; however, many of them also indicated on the survey that they were just as happy working with other tools. Additionally, it can also be inferred that many of these computer users have had little formal computer training, since the median age of fans is too high for them to have had ready access to computers in school. This would seem to confirm Gee's Just-in-Time and On-Demand principle as it relates to computer literacy and usage. Since computer literate fans seem to have learned computer skills when they were needed, it seems logical that this might be true in modern classrooms. It then follows that students need easily available computers in the classroom that can be used for a wide variety of projects in order for students to develop valuable computer literacy skills.

Visual Literacy

Today's environment is filled with images, icons, graphs, charts and other visual symbols. Today's teachers-in-training take an entire class on how to teach traditional reading skills (phonics, vocabulary, and text comprehension); however, they are rarely given any information about how to teach skills related to reading the pictures, tables, and figures in those books. As we move further into the global digital information age, more and more information is going to be transmitted as images. If text interaction preferences are any indication, fans appear to have a strong sense of visual literacy. They are users of comic books and graphic novels, both of which are filled with visual symbols.

Additionally, many fans also access international symbols comfortably, as indicated by their interaction with manga and anime. More research is needed to determine how fans learned this type of literacy, and how it can be encouraged in educational settings.

Genre Literacy

Most school reading programs attempt to address the interests of a diverse population by exposing students to a variety of reading types and styles. This is a good thing. However, is it always so? As Roberts (1990) points out, a person needs to have read widely within a genre to truly understand it. If this is so, can students really comprehend poetry if they only read one poem per academic quarter? Do they really understand the impact of biographies or memoires if they only read an excerpt from one per semester? Perhaps the abovementioned libraries should be filled with anthology collections and series books, so that students could try out larger chunks of different genres during their Sustained Silent Reading periods.

Identity Issues

I should not have been surprised by the finding that many fans in their early years had had extremely negative identities pushed upon them. My conversational partners were called stupid, trouble-makers, and underachievers. By the standards of the Academy, they might have been ill-adapted to formal school learning at the time the labels were applied. However, little or no effort was made to help students change these labels. Fortunately, the fans I spoke to found a friend or teacher who showed them how to succeed in the academy or mainstream society. Teachers today are taught in diversity programs to avoid applying overtly negative labels to their students.

However, authorities, teachers, and even other fans seem to be applying labels that might affect learners or future fans. For example, one of my conversation partners defined herself as less of a reader because she mostly read media tie-ins. I was told this as she was telling me about a summer reading novel and the college courses she was taking. Who told her that she was not as much of a reader as others? Mendlesohn (2009) may be answering that question when she argues that children are learning the socially acceptable truth that genre books like horror, adventure, and science fiction do not count; at best, to cite a common belief of parents and educators these "will do" until students will read something better.

Sub-Cultural Diversity

It is not likely that people are going to stop stereotyping other people any time in the near future. However, this study does show that many stereotypes are not accurate. Science fiction readers are not loser-geeks living in their parents' basements. Comic book readers are not adolescents who are only looking at the pictures. Anime fans and computer game players have not become so overwhelmed with virtual violence that they have become murderous psychopaths. This study suggests that the overwhelming majority of fans who interact with these genres are well-adjusted, successful members of modern society.

Still To Be Done

As mentioned earlier, more research needs to be done. Most obviously, it needs to be done in different populations. LosCon represents only one group of fans. It would be extremely fruitful to conduct this study at different conventions to determine if the demographics, attitudes and text interactions are similar. Further, since LosCon is tends to

be book driven, it would be interesting to ascertain how different the demographics, attitudes and interactions were at differently themed conventions. For example, are fans who attend *Doctor Who* conventions, less book oriented, and if so by how much and in what ways? Also, do media fans have a different relationship with the mainstream, since their medium has been more positively received by the general population?

More observations should be done at LosCon, which lasts 2 ½ days. In addition to organizing and explaining the survey party, I also sat on six panels and observed several more. I also went to the Dealers' Room and Art Show to make observations there. Additionally, I spent time volunteering at a fan table to fulfill my obligations to a group and some friends. I also had to talk to my friends, eat, and sleep. There was only so much time. I could not see it all or talk to everyone I wanted to meet.

For one thing, I was not as successful at meeting younger fans as I would have liked to have been. Younger fans have their own space, the Teen Lounge, where adults who are not parents are not allowed to go. Interviewing fans who are in school now could be very valuable in determining how science fiction fandom can positively impact the education system. Similarly, I regret not having been able to spend more time helping in Children's Programming and thus getting a more clear of the children at LosCon. Although parents were willing to let me conduct a few workshops for the children, they were not comfortable with letting me interview their kids. Perhaps if I spend more time in children's programming, parents will come to trust me and allow me to interview their children.

A question arises from this study of science fiction fandom; namely, how does it compare to other genres? Do mystery fans do the same things we do when they get

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together? Do romance readers embody their genre at conventions? Do Western readers have conventions or comparable gatherings? What happens when Jane Austin fans get together? In short, does what I have learned in this study apply to readers in other discourses, and if so, to what extent?

There was one theme that arose during this research that this paper was not designed to discuss. Many conversational partners mentioned loneliness and lack of acceptance by their peers and teachers. Currently, bullying (whether or overt or unintentional) is of major concern in our schools. It would appear that fan culture has helped many young people to work through their struggles with social intolerance. More research needs to be done about how fandom has dealt with these issues and to determine the role it can play as it continues to intermingle with the mainstream.

The last task is for academia in general. Years ago, as I was working on my degree in reading, I observed that no studies had been done on children who were already good readers. All of the studies I was told to read were about reluctant readers, challenged readers and underperformers. Mendlesohn (2009) makes the same observation when she notes that children who do read "are invisible in the literature, which focuses overwhelmingly on the reluctant reader" (p. 25). This gap must be corrected. Teachers need to understand how to keep the reading child motivated in today's classroom.

CHAPTER 8

IT'S BEEN A LONG ROAD, GETTING' FROM THERE TO HERE[41]

Have you ever tried to get to your feet with a sprained dignity?[42]

-- Madeleine L'Engle

This study required that I draw on tacit knowledge gained over 40 years. The act of organizing this study required that I finally put into words what I had known for decades. Thus, the quote from the title song of Roddenberry's *Enterprise* evokes the journey I have taken. Talking to my fellow fans, invoked memories that sent me searching for books I had not read since my childhood. L'Engle's (1962) Mrs. Whatsit asks the above question as she introduces herself to Meg before she leads the children on their journey. Dissertations are themselves journeys. The section that follows describes the me I re-met while I was doing this research.

My Road to Fandom – Or an Interview with Myself

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, I have been a fan since elementary school when I read my first science fiction novel about a young woman with thick glasses and poor handwriting who was also a genius who did not fit in at school. When I found this novel, I was recovering from eye surgery and fighting with a teacher who had told my mother she should not speak to me so much because my vocabulary was too large and so I was not fitting in with my peers. Furthermore, my early years in science fiction were also the years I was the crippled girl. Shortly after I entered junior high school, it was discovered that I had a severe case of scoliosis. To keep my body straight I was fitted with a Milwaukee brace, which I wore 23 hours per day. Although I did not know it, I had a lot

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[41] Opening sequence of *Enterprise*
[42] My favorite line ever from my home run science fiction book.

in common with many early science fiction authors and fans, many of whom suffered from physical disabilities. I understood Meg (L'Engle's lead protagonist); at least I did not have to go save my father from the forces of evil.

I will always owe my mother a great debt for adding that Newbery Medal winner, Madeleine L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time,* to my pile of books at the library checkout counter. Although she didn't know it, she had planted the seeds of a fan. I had always been a compliant reader; it was something to do. Now, however, I had a goal. I was going to read every science fiction book in the local library. I read a lot of them. Little did I know that I was doing what Roberts said I would be doing: I was learning the patterns of the genre. In the process, I learned about other genres as well. I fell in love with the short story because so many of the books my library had were anthologies. (I specifically remember a series called *Alpha* by Robert Silverberg). Through the anthologies, I was introduced to the important authors and I would start looking specifically for books by them.

I can also thank my school system for my love of reading and science fiction. I do not think my elementary school's library had any science fiction in it; at least I do not remember finding any there. But we did have a school library, an entire classroom full of books, mostly staff by volunteer parents. My teachers took us to that library every week and when we came back, we sat at our desks and read for half an hour. As a matter of fact, time was made almost every day for reading our library books. If we didn't have our school library books with us or we had already finished them, our teachers maintained class libraries so there was always a book available. This was, I think, before the advent of a formal Sustained Silent Reading program, but we did it anyway.

I took a class called Independent Reading in 9th grade. At the time, the 18-week semester was divided into 3 six-week blocks. Our assignment was the same each of those terms: establish a reading theme or goal, and then write a report about it. We did a lot more free voluntary reading in that class. I still remember two of those projects. One of them was a study of dystopic literature. I read two books by Aldous Huxley--*Brave New World* and *Ape and Essence*—and two books by George Orwell—*1984* and *Animal Farm*—that period. I didn't know it then, but I was learning about intertextuality. The other project I remember was to read 50 short stories. I wrote mini book reports on each of them on a recipe card and turned them in to the teacher in a box. Even today, the short story is still my favorite text format.

Of course, not everything I read was good. I read what was on the shelf. Some of it might have been good, but it may not have been appropriate for junior high girls. For example, I loved the short stories in the *Playboy Book of Science Fiction*, which I did not show to my mother. Although most of it was just good science fiction, some of it talked about lifestyles that she might not have wanted me to consider at the age of 14. However, since I had already learned that I was supposed to be reading "better" stuff, I read *Les Miserables* in public and my science fiction at night.

My mother never understood why I read all that science fiction. I remember trying to explain to her how much I hated reading descriptions of real places or fictional people. If I read a mainstream book, I always skipped over the character descriptions or the in-depth depictions of every day events. (I got through a lot of books that were supposed to be good for me very quickly that way.) After reading Gunn's comparison of mainstream literature and science fiction and Mendlesohn's critique of what teachers expect us to

read, I now understand that I did not want what was in those other books. I wanted results at the end of my stories. I wanted things to change. My text habits are no different today. I do not go to movies with sad endings. I do not find fictional portrayals of the real world valuable. If I want to be sad or see reality, I can go to the city pound and see what happens to stray animals, or I can visit with the homeless veterans who camp near the stray cat colony I feed. I volunteer with many painful realities. I do not need to read about them.

In college, I met people who shared my love of science fiction. My roommate introduced me to Tolkien. We are still friends. I married the man who introduced me to Heinlein. There were a few others. We became a little clique, traveling around San Francisco, going to science fiction movies together. We went to *Star Wars* before it went into wide release. I remember sitting on the Muni bus doing that little hand sign from *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. We all got up at some horribly early hour of the morning to watch the first space shuttle launch in the TV lounge in the dormitory. Of course not everything was worthy of such memory or impact. We saw some really bad movies but we enjoyed them anyway. And, now I can say that I was adding to my understanding of genre patterns or maybe acquiring a better understanding of visual literacy. It was not quite fandom but I had friends, and we all liked the same things.

I had my first taste of fandom right after I was married. We were newlyweds and a long way from home in St. Louis, living barely above the poverty line while my husband attended medical school. Somehow, we found a *Doctor Who* convention. We'd been watching some of that show really late at night on PBS so we scraped our pennies together to attend. I admit that first experience spoiled me a little. There could not have

been more than 200 people there to meet Tom Baker, one of the show's stars. We went to some panels and the banquet (it was included in the cost of a convention membership) and had our pictures taken with the actor. I will never forget the experience of interacting with the genre in such an intimate setting.

My husband's school schedule and our poverty kept us from getting seriously involved in fandom, but we did find some other science fiction fans to put together a group that played Dungeons & Dragons. That group fell apart when several members of that cohort graduated from medical school and went off to medical residencies around the country. My husband and I, again, ended up a long way from home, this time on the east coast of Florida. While we were there, a fencing friend of my husband's called to tell him she and her fiancé were going to visit Florida to end the WorldCon that was being held in Orlando that year. She thought they might like to come visit us in Jacksonville. We decided we would go with them to the convention. They are the friends who acted as my lab assistants for the Thesis Complesis party.

That experience was completely different from our earlier one in St. Louis. Everyone and everything was available there. Or so it seemed at the time. Our friends already knew what to expect as we made our way through that week. They took us to the Masquerade, the Art Show and the Dealers' Room. We met some of the people they knew from southern California. I bought books. I had them signed by authors I had been reading for years. One of them was the aforementioned Robert Silverberg whose works I had read during junior high school.

The navy transferred my husband from Florida to San Diego shortly thereafter. Our friends who had guided us through our first WorldCon lived in Los Angeles; they

invited us to LosCon. Of course we went. They knew everyone, so we met lots of people like us. Because they needed help at the OASIS booth, we got involved and met more people. I do not remember why we started costuming. In the beginning, it was just my husband and son on stage at the Masquerade. It was easier to get two people ready for a performance and have the rest of the team act as support; however, the costume ideas got bigger every year and so did the costumes. We are now master class competitors when we join in the Masquerade.

My family and I have attended almost every LosCon since 1992, and many of the WorldCons; consequently, many of my friends are in faraway places. However since they do the same thing I do, which is interact with genre fiction, we always have something to talk about when we meet at conventions. After the Thesis Complesis party, I made even more friends. I talk to them on Facebook now. Fandom makes it easy to meet people because you start out with something in common: the ability to interact with text.

Do I read speculative fiction as escapist literature? Maybe. I prefer to think of it as a sign of hope. There will be different worlds. They may be better ones. One hundred years ago, I would have been blind and crooked, if I was not one of the women who died in childbirth. Fifty years ago, I could not have picked up my telephone and direct dialed my sister who was working in Moscow. Thirty years ago, my son could not have checked in with mom between classes from a thousand miles away. If those things have come true, why can't I live in a world where there are no more homeless people or animals?

The Hard Question: Pick 3

The question on the survey that seemed to cause the most consternation was the one that asked respondents to list their three favorite creators of the genre. There were

several conversations around me at that party as people tried to narrow down their choices. One respondent wrote "Only 3?????" Others just altered the survey to suit their needs. One respondent divided it into two categories: classics and modern works; another made one category for books and one for media, while a third provided a list of science fiction and a list of fantasy. (On the other hand, a few respondents who only listed one or two genre producers.) As did several of my respondents, I am answering this question by creating sections of three.

The Gateway Drugs: Madeleine L'Engle, Gene Roddenberry, John Christopher

SciFi: (where I read most often) Marian Zimmer Bradley, Anne McCaffrey, David Brin

Fantasy: Mercedes Lackey, Jim Butcher, Walt Disney

Classics: J.R.R. Tolkien, Robert Heinlein, Isaac Asimov

<div align="center">About My Multiple Literacies</div>

I have already discussed my genre and traditional literacy. However, as we have already discussed, literacy goes beyond the printed page. I may be a traditionally training reading specialist, but I know that reading and learning on the computer is the way of the future, which is why I teach teachers how to use computers in the classroom. While I cannot program a computer and have no desire to learn about hardware, I can use many kinds of software. I write slide presentations for my classes, some of which I teach online. My students have made their own videos which have been posted on the web to make them part of their curriculum. I can make a spreadsheet well enough to make the charts used in this paper. I can do these things using both Windows and Macs. I am computer literate.

Unfortunately, I have to admit that I am weak in the area of visual literacy. I can read art and icons if they do not move and someone has put them where I know I am supposed to be looking, like an easel or a t-shirt for example. However, my son would call me slow because I miss so much if material is presented digitally. I can play video games but only after someone shows me what I am supposed to be looking for. I "watch" TV from the kitchen because I do so much better just listening to it. We go to see movies on the big screen, where I am impressed by all the whizbangs but have a hard time keeping track of what is going on. My son or husband will then rent the movie, so I can watch it at home and they can show me what I missed.

My husband and son both like graphic novels. I had no idea how to read them until I read McCloud's book. His book about comics told me what comic book creators are trying to accomplish. He wrote it as a graphic monograph (!) so I had to look at the pictures. It was hard but I worked it out.

Writing this dissertation has provided many learning opportunities such as how to scan artifacts, what to do with a digital camera and a video camera, and effective ways to format the results of these efforts into larger documents. I also mastered the tape recorder and the spy-like machine that I used to record the interviews. I have ordered two more of Scott McCloud's books so I can practice reading more pictures. I am unsure of my next project. However, I am sure the learning will continue. Science fiction taught me that.

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Appendix A
Informed Consent Form – Survey

Working title: **"Close Encounters of a Different Kind: A Study of Science Fiction Culture and its Multiple Literacies"**

Thank you for attending my party. Like many parties at this convention, it has an ulterior motive--I am conducting research for my doctoral dissertation.

SO, in addition to having a good time, I would very much like you to fill out the attached survey. It should only take about 10 minutes of your time. If you choose to complete the survey, you will be given a badge ribbon. You are not required to fill out the survey to attend the party. You do not need to put your name on the survey. If you choose to identify yourself, your information will be kept completely confidential.

The following information is provided in order to help you make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

The purpose of this study is to depict science fiction fan culture and to demonstrate its multiple literacies which may include print literacy (e.g. books), visual literacy (e.g. movies or art), and computer literacy (e.g. blogging, fan fiction, or website development). Additionally, this study will show that science fiction culture learns and evolves through the use of affinity groups, which are groups that come together to achieve common goals, and the spaces they create to do so. Further, it will attempt to demonstrate the application of the culture's use of affinity groups in the classroom. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research. However, due to the anonymous nature of this study there is no way for your completed survey to be withdrawn from the study.

You may find the survey experience enjoyable and you will have contributed to the documentation of the history and culture of science fiction fandom.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign the statement attached.

Researcher: Gail Bondi, PhD candidate, Indiana University of Pennsylvania
11374 Weeden Island Way
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(904) 716-5676; damereading1@yahoo.com
Project Director: Dr. Jeannine Fontaine
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724-357-2457 or 724-357-2261; jfontain@iup.edu
This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (phone: 724-357-7730)

Appendix B
Interview Informed Consent Form – Adult

Working title: **"Close Encounters of a Different Kind: A Study of Science Fiction Culture and its Multiple Literacies"**

You are invited to participate in this research study. The following information is provided in order to help you make an informed decision as to whether or not to participate. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

The purpose of this study is to depict science fiction fan culture and to demonstrate its multiple literacies which may include print literacy (e.g. books), visual literacy (e.g. movies or art), and computer literacy (e.g. blogging, fan fiction, or website development). Additionally, this study will show that science fiction culture learns and evolves through the use of affinity groups, which are groups that come together to achieve common goals, and the spaces they create to do so. Further, it will attempt to demonstrate the application of the culture's use of affinity groups in the classroom. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research. You will be provided with a copy of the transcript of the interview and pages from the study where information obtained from you is used so that you can make comments about what has been written.

You may find the interview experience enjoyable and you will have contributed to the documentation of the history and culture of science fiction fandom.

Your participation in this study is <u>voluntary</u>. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adverse affects. If you choose to participate, you may withdraw at any time by notifying the Project Director, Dr. Jeannine Fontaine or me. Upon your request to withdraw, all information pertaining to you will be destroyed. If you choose to participate, all information will be held in strict confidence and no identifying information will be made available to anyone.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign the statement attached.

Researcher: Gail Bondi, PhD candidate, Indiana University of Pennsylvania
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This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (phone: 724-357-7730)

Informed Consent Form – Guardian of Child Interviewee

Working title: **"Close Encounters of a Different Kind: A Study of Science Fiction Culture and its Multiple Literacies"**

Your child has been invited to participate in this research study. The following information is provided in order to help you make an informed decision as to whether or not to encourage him/her to participate. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

The purpose of this study is to depict science fiction fan culture and to demonstrate its multiple literacies which may include print literacy (e.g. books), visual literacy (e.g. movies or art), and computer literacy (e.g. blogging, fan fiction, or website development). Additionally, this study will show that science fiction culture learns and evolves through the use of affinity groups, which are groups that come together to achieve common goals, and the spaces they create to do so. Further, it will attempt to demonstrate the application of the culture's use of affinity groups in the classroom. I have chosen to include children in this study because the focus of this study is where and how learning takes place and children are our best examples. If you and your child agree to his/her participation, the child will be asked to participate in one main interview at the convention, and possibly another brief follow-up conversation with me via phone or Internet. Each interview will be no longer than 30 minutes. A list of the questions I will be asking is attached to this letter. If at any time your child becomes uncomfortable or bored, I will end the interview. You are invited to stay with the child during the interview. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research. You will be provided with a copy of the transcript of the interview and pages from the study where information obtained from your child is used so that you can make comments about what has been written.

Your child may find the interview experience enjoyable and he or she will have the opportunity to display his or her knowledge about our culture while contributing to the documentation of the history of science fiction fandom.

Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to decide not to have your child participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without any adverse effects. If you choose to allow your child to participate, you may withdraw at any time by notifying the Project Director, Dr. Jeannine Fontaine or me. Upon your request to withdraw, all information pertaining to your child will be destroyed. If you choose to participate, all information will be held in strict confidence and no identifying information will be made available to anyone.

If you are willing to have your child participate in this study, please sign the statement attached.

Researcher: Gail Bondi, PhD candidate, Indiana University of Pennsylvania
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Appendix D
Child's Assent Form

Working title: **"Close Encounters of a Different Kind: A Study of Science Fiction Culture and its Multiple Literacies"**

Thank you for talking to me today. I have already asked your (parent/guardian) for permission for you to talk to me. My name is Gail. I teach people how to be teachers. I also go to school and I am doing a project for my class. I am going to tell you about my research study so you can decide if you want to help me with it. It is OK for you to ask me questions about the study.

What I want to talk to you about is what we do at science fiction conventions. I would like to tell other people about what we do and learn at conventions. I am going to write a book so that people like teachers can see how we think about science fiction and how to use that information in their classrooms.

If you get bored and do not want to talk to me anymore, just tell me and we can talk about something else or I will go away. If you decide you do not want me to talk about you in my book, tell your (parent/guardian) and I will rip up everything I have written down.

For your safety, I promise not to tell anyone your real name. Instead, we will pick a secret identity name for you.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign the statement attached.

Researcher: Gail Bondi, PhD candidate, Indiana University of Pennsylvania
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Appendix E
Informed Consent Form

VOLUNTARY CONSENT FORM:

I have read and understand the information on the form and I consent to volunteer to be a participant in this study. I understand that my responses are completely confidential and that I have the right to withdraw at any time. I have received an unsigned copy of this informed consent form to keep in my possession.

Name *(please print):* _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____ **Phone where you can be reached**:_____

Best days and times to reach you: _____

_____

I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature.

Date: _____
Investigator's signature:_____

Appendix F
Informed Consent Form - Survey

VOLUNTARY CONSENT FORM:

I have read and understand the information on the form and I consent to volunteer to be a participant in this study. I understand that my responses are completely confidential and that I have the right to withdraw at any time. I have received an unsigned copy of this informed consent form to keep in my possession.

Name *(please print):* _____

Signature:_____

Date: _____

Appendix G
Informed Consent Form – Visual Media

Working title: **"Close Encounters of a Different Kind: A Study of Science Fiction Culture and its Multiple Literacies"**

You are invited to participate in this research study. The following information is provided in order to help you make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

The purpose of this study is to depict science fiction fan culture and to demonstrate its multiple literacies which may include print literacy (e.g. books), visual literacy (e.g. movies or art), and computer literacy (e.g. blogging, fan fiction, or website development). Additionally, this study will show that science fiction culture learns and evolves through the use of affinity groups, which are groups that come together to achieve common goals, and the spaces they create to do so. Further, it will attempt to demonstrate the application of the culture's use of affinity groups in the classroom. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research. Photographs will be used to illustrate science fiction fan culture and art.

The pictures I use will be an opportunity to display your work to an audience which does not normally see this side of you or fandom. Further, you will be contributing to the documentation of fan culture and history.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with me. If you choose to participate, you may withdraw at any time by notifying the Project Director, Dr. Jeannine Fontaine, or me. Upon your request to withdraw, all information pertaining to you will be destroyed.

Because fan art and clothing can be very distinctive, **I cannot guarantee anonymity for participants who are photographed.** However, no personal information about you will be revealed in this study.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign the statement attached.

Researcher: Gail Bondi, PhD candidate, Indiana University of Pennsylvania
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This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (phone: 724-357-7730)

VOLUNTARY CONSENT FORM:

I have read and understand the information on the consent form and I consent to volunteer to be a participant in this study. I understand that my anonymity cannot be guaranteed. I understand that I have the right to withdraw at any time. I have received an unsigned copy of this informed consent form to keep in my possession.

Name *(please print):* _____

Signature:_____

Date: _____ **Phone where you can be reached**:_____

Best days and times to reach you: _____

I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature.

Date: _____
Investigator's signature:_____

1) Describe your early experiences with science fiction and fantasy.

    a. Do you remember what your first book was?

    b. Do you remember your first genre movie or TV series?

2) Why do you think science fiction and fantasy became so important to you?

3) How were you introduced to fandom?

4) Describe your early experiences with fandom.

5) What kind of things do you do for the convention?

6) Why do you participate in the activity(s) from questionnaire? Have you always done this activity or have you done others?

    a. Do you go to panels? Which ones?

    b. Do you volunteer for the convention?

7) Why do you remain involved in the fan community?

8) Does fandom expand or interfere with your other identities/discourses/mainstream life? How?

    a. Has it affected your life style choice?

    b. Does your experience with fandom influence your choice of friends? If so, how; and why do you think this is so?

9) Are you a member of other fans groups or other types of fandom?

    a. Describe them

10) Do you maintain communication with your convention friends during the year?

    a. If so, how do you communicate?

11) Describe your earliest memories of reading and writing.

12) Describe your experiences in the traditional school system.

13) Has being a science fiction fan affected your schooling or educational

choices? How?

14) Is fandom a subculture? Why? How?

15) Do you think fandom is different from mainstream culture? Why? Why not?

How?

16) Current related activities

a. What are you reading right now?

b. What are you writing right now?

c. What movies have you seen recently?

d. What TV series do you watch?

e. Is any of your reading or writing work related? How?

f. What are you looking forward to reading/writing/watching?

17) Is there anything else you would like to tell me about fandom, science fiction,

or yourself?

Appendix J
Questions for Younger Fans

1) What do you think science fiction is?

    a) What do you think of when you think of science fiction?

2) Do you like coming to conventions? Why?

3) What kinds of things are you going to do while you are here at the convention?

4) Do you like to read/be read to?

    a) What kinds of things do you like to read?

    b) What is your favorite story?

    c) What are you reading right now?

5) What do you watch on TV?

6) What is your favorite movie?

7) What do you want to be when you grow up?

8) Can you describe to me what you are doing right now?

    a) What are you making?

9) Tell me about what you are wearing

9) How old are you? What grade are you in?

10) Do your friends at home or at school like science fiction?

    a) Have you made friends here at the convention? Tell me about them.

    b) Do you have friends you only see at conventions?

11) Is there anything else you would like to tell me about the convention, science fiction, or yourself?

Font size has been considerably reduced to fit standard page. Actual flyer is horizontal with varied size type fonts. Room number will be added at hotel check in.

Thesis Complesis Party

Lab Rats needed

for a dissertation study of fan culture and its possible impact on education

Come for cheese, snacks and a short survey

After the Masquerade until 2 a.m.
Room 1714

Appendix L

Thesis Complesis Questionnaire – **Please feel free to make other comments, corrections or additions as you see fit! Thank you for your participation!**

1. How many science fiction-related conventions have you attended? (circle one)

2-5   6-10   10-20   Too many to count   This is my first convention

2. How many LosCons have you attended? (circle one)

2-5   6-10   10-20   Almost all of them   This is my first LosCon

3. Which aspect of our genre do you prefer? ? (circle all that apply)

science fiction   fantasy   other _____

4. Which of the following statements best describes you and your friends? (circle one)

a. All of my friends are involved in science fiction and fantasy.
b. More than half of my friends take part in fandom and related activities.
c. Some of my friends like the movies and read the books but they don't really do fandom.
d. Occasionally, I drag my friends to see a particularly good science fiction movie

5. List 3 of your favorite creators (authors, producers, artists) of the genre.

a. _____ b. _____ c. _____

6. Which activities will you attend or participate in (or have you attended or participated in) this convention?
(circle all that apply)

a. Art show
b. Dealers' Room
c. Panels
d. Filking
e. Masquerade
f. Other costuming events

g. Anime/Movie Room
h. Game Room
i. Fan Tables
j. Gophering/Convention staff
k. Room Parties
l. Convention-Sponsored Parties

Other _____

7. With which media do you interact? (circle all that apply)
a. Books
b. Movies
c. Television
d. Computer Gaming
e. Blogging

f. Fan Fiction
g. Anime
h. Comic Books/Graphic Novels
i. Fan Art

Other: _____

THERE ARE A FEW QUESTIONS REMAINING ON THE OTHER SIDE

8. How would you describe your technological literacy?
    a. Technology is an essential component of my life
    b. I can use a wide variety of software and hardware for personal and professional purposes
    c. I am competent with technology; however, I prefer to use other media when given a choice
    d. My technology use is limited to the most basic functions (i.e. email, online shopping, iTunes)
    e. I am not comfortable with many forms of technology.

9. Is there any other information you wish to provide?

This study is exploring the diversity of fandom. Please provide a little information about yourself. <u>If any of these questions make you uncomfortable, please move on to the next question.</u>

Gender: Male   Female

Age: under 18   18-25   25-35   35-45   over 45

Ethnicity: White   Black   Hispanic   Asian
    Other_____

Income level per household (in US$ or equivalent for comparison purposes):

less than $25,000 $25,000-$50,000 $50,000-$100,000   Greater than $100,000

Highest Level of Education

High School
Some College
Bachelor's Degree
Master's Degree
Terminal Degree – (i.e. Ph.D, M.D, MFA, DDS, etc.) - _____
Other: _____

In broad terms, where do you live? _____ (i.e. country, region, state, city)

If you have any further questions about my research or wish to hear more about this project, please do not hesitate to contact me at damereading1@yahoo.com.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

IF YOU WISH TO REMAIN ANONYMOUS, DO NOT RETURN THIS PAGE.
Please place your questionnaire in the specimen box. The lab attendant will provide you with your ribbon.

An important aspect of my research involves the personal experiences of people who are part of the science fiction community. IF you are willing to be interviewed at a later date, please provide me with the following information. Providing this information in no way requires that you participate in the interview. You can always change your mind.

Name:

_____

E-mail Address:

_____

Telephone Number:

_____

I anticipate contacting you in early December to set up a time for our conversation.

Thank you for your participation in this study.

Appendix M
Approval to Conduct Research at the Site

[The e-mail is forwarded by a Los Angeles friend, BN. MM, the Con Chair for LosCon 36. RJ is the Party Maven. Personal email addresses have been removed.]

From: BN

You have the official LosCon Okie-Dokie stamp of approval!

-----Forwarded Message-----
From: LosCon 36 Chair
Sent: Aug 30, 2009 3:32 AM
To: Josie
Subject: Re: Fw: Science Fiction Culture

Hi BN,

Please tell Gail that she is most welcome at LosCon 36. However, to have a party she would need to contact our Party Maven.

As you probably know though, most, if not all party rooms are given to groups that are promoting other conventions, etc., but to be on the safe side, here is the email address for the Party Maven: party_maven@loscon.org

Thanks for helping to promote education in the Science Fiction community, and I'm looking forward to seeing both of you at LosCon 36,

MM

****

[As instructed, the party maven, RJ, has been contacted and been sent all of the appropriate information.]

Not a problem. Please let me know when you get your hotel info and also let me know which night(s) you'd prefer to throw a party. We'll try to accommodate your request for the night(s) preference(s).

RJ (Party Maven)

On Aug 20, 2009, at 8:48 AM, Gail Bondi wrote:

Thanks for the info.

I am not really a group. I am a researcher. Will that be a problem?

Gail Bondi
 damereading1@yahoo.com

--- On Thu, 8/20/09, RJ wrote:

From: RJ
Subject: LosCon 36 party
To: Gail Bondi
Date: Thursday, August 20, 2009, 12:54 AM

Hello, Gail. Here's the current info re: parties.

From your Party Maven:

If you want to host a party, here's what you need to do:

1) Contact the hotel and make your room reservation for the night(s) you are staying at the hotel. Request your sleeping arrangements as if it were a normal stay. Remember to use the LosCon code.

2) Email me with the following information:

 (a) your room confirmation number,
 (b) the name of the person the room reservation is under,
 (c) the night or nights you want to host a party, and
 d) the name of the group/organization hosting the party.

The LosCon 36 powers-that-be will get back to you regarding room assignments. Do not contact the Marriott regarding party room assignments. That's the bailiwick of the LosCon 36 staff. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me directly at the above email address. Please be patient as we may not have actual assignments until much closer to the actual convention.

 Thanks in advance.

Also, check the LosCon web site for party rules.

****

[My responding email complying with the party maven's information request.]

a) your room confirmation number,
88182268
b) the name of the person the room reservation is under, DD
c) the night or nights you want to host a party, and
the night of the masquerade - so I am assuming Saturday
d) the name of the group/organization hosting the party.
Gail Bondi's dissertation study

We have also purchased our convention memberships

Gail Bondi

Appendix N
Science Fiction's Grand Masters

The title Damon Knight Memorial Grand Master is bestowed upon a living author for a lifetime's achievement in science fiction and/or fantasy. Nominations for recognition as a Grand Master are made by the president of SFWA; the final selection must be approved by a majority of the SFWA officers and participating past presidents. Until 2002 the title was simply "Grand Master." In 2002 it was renamed in honor of SFWA's founder, Damon Knight, who died that year.
(Data in parentheses indicates the year in which the title was bestowed.)

Robert A. Heinlein (1975)
Jack Williamson (1976)
Clifford D. Simak (1977)
L. Sprague de Camp (1979)
Fritz Leiber (1981)
Andre Norton (1984)
Arthur C. Clarke (1986)
Isaac Asimov (1987)
Alfred Bester (1988)
Ray Bradbury (1989)
Lester Del Rey (1991)
Frederik Pohl (1993)
Damon Knight (1995)
A. E. Van Vogt (1996)
Jack Vance (1997)
Poul Anderson (1998)
Hal Clement (Harry Stubbs) (1999)
Brian Aldiss (2000)
Philip Jose Farmer (2001)
Ursula K. LeGuin (2003)
Robert Silverberg (2004)
Anne McCaffrey (2005)
Harlan Ellison (2006)
James Gunn (2007)
Michael Moorcock (2008)
Harry Harrison (2009)
Joe Haldeman (2010)

From the archives of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America at
http://www.sfwa.org/archive/awards/grand.htm

Appendix O:
World Science Fiction Conventions

Year	Date	Location
1939	Nycon I	New York, NY
1940	Chicon I	Chicago, IL
1941	Denvention I	Denver, CO
	(1942-1945 World War II intervenes, convention not held	
1946	Pacificon I	Los Angeles, CA
1947	Philcon I	Philadelphia, PA
1948	Torcon I	Toronto, Canada
1949	Cinvension	Cincinnati, OH
1950	NorWesCon	Portland, Or
1951	Nolacon I	New Orleans, LA
1952	TASFiC	Chicago, IL
	(Tenth Anniversary Science Fiction Convention)	
1953	Philcon II	Philadelphia, PA
1954	SFcon	San Francisco, CA
1955	Clevention	Cleveland, OH
1956	New YorkCon	New York, NY
1957	Loncon I	London, England
1058	Solacon,	South Gate, CA
1959	Detention	Detroit, MI
1960	Pittcon, PA	Pittsburgh, PA
1961	Seacon	Seattle, WA
1962	Chicon III	Chicago, IL
1963	Discon I	Washington, DC
1964	Pacificon II	Oakland, CA
1965	Loncon II	London, England
1966	Tricon	Cleveland, OH
1967	Nycon III	New York, NY
1968	Baycon	Oakland, CA
1969	St. Louiscon	St. Louis, MO
1970	Heicon	Heidelberg, West German
1971	Noreascon I	Boston, MA
1972	LA Con I	Los Angeles, CA
1973	Torcon II	Toronto, CA
1974	Discon II	Washington, DC
1975	Aussiecon One	Melbourne, Australia
1976	MidAmeriCon	Kansas City, MO
1977	SunCon	Miami Beach, FL
1978	IguanaCon	Phoenix, AZ
1979	Seacon	Brighton, England
1980	Noreascon II	Boston, MA
1981	Denvention II	Denver, CO

1982	Chicon IV	Chicago, IL
1983	ConStellation	Baltimore, MD
1984	LAcon II	Anaheim, CA
1985	Aussie Two	Melbourne, Australia
1986	ConFederation	Atlanta, GA
1987	Conspiracy	Brighton, England
1988	Nolacon II	New Orleans, LA
1989	Noreascon III	Boston, MA
1990	ConFiction	The Hague, Netherlands
1991	Chicon V	Chicago, IL
1992	Magicon	Orlando, FL (attended by researcher)
1993	ConFrancisco	San Francisco, CA (attended by researcher)
1994	Conadian	Winnipeg, Canada
1995	Intersection	Glasgow, Scotland (attended by researcher)
1996	LAcon III	Anaheim, CA (attended by researcher)
1997	LoneStarCon 2	San Antonio, TX (attended by researcher)
1998	BucConeer	Baltimore, MD (attended by researcher)
1999	Aussiecon Three	Melbourne, Australia
2000	Chicon 2000	Chicago, IL (attended by researcher)
2001	The Millennium Philcon	Philadelphia, PA (attended by researcher)
2002	ConJose	San Jose, CA
2003	Torcon 3	Toronto, CA
2004	Noreascon 4	Boston, MA
2005	Intersection 2	Edinburgh, Scotland
2006	LAcon IV	Anaheim, Ca
2007	Nippon 2007	Yokohama, Japan
2008	Denvention 3	Denver, CO
2009	Anticipation	Montreal, Canada (attended by researcher)
2010	AussieCon 4	Australia
2011	Renovation	Reno, Nevada
2012	Chicon 7	Chicago, Illinois

(compiled from Wikipedia.com)

Appendix P
Definitions of Science Fiction
From Neyir Cenk Gökçe's Home-On-The-Net

[This website no longer exists which is unfortunate. It is still described by Kelly (2011) as a "wonderful site". I am glad I retrieved a copy when I did.]

These definitions of science fiction are for those of you who are not satisfied with Damon Knight's definition of science fiction, which appears in the rec.arts.sf.written FAQ:
"...[Science Fiction] means what we point to when we say it."
Some of the definitions here have been obtained over the internet in the bad old days where there were no flashy www interfaces to the net, over gopher and ftp links, so not only am I unable to credit the sources I found them, but also I am not exactly sure of their authenticity. Some of the definitions, I think, I got from the gopher server at Lysator. The definitions I have personally extracted from reference works and such are always credited below the excerpt, and I say when I am quoting verbatim or I am paraphrasing stuff taken from conversations etc.
Last Updated on May 25, 1996

Brian W. Aldiss
Science fiction is the search for definition of man and his status in the universe which will stand in our advanced but confused state of knowledge (science), and is characteristically cast in the Gothic or post-Gothic mould.
Trillion Year Spree: the History of Science Fiction (London, 1986)

Dick Allen
Is it any wonder that a new generation has rediscovered science fiction, rediscovered a form of literature that argues through its intuitive force that the individual can shape and change and influence and triumph; that man can eliminate both war and poverty; that miracles *are* possible; that love, if given a chance, can become the main driving force of human relationships?

Kingsley Amis
Science Fiction is that class of prose narrative treating of a situation that could not arise in the world we know, but which is hypothesized on the basis of some innovation in science or technology, or pseudo-technology, whether human or extra-terrestrial in origin.
New Maps Of Hell (London, 1960)

Benjamin Appel
Science fiction reflects scientific thought; a fiction of things-to-come based on things-on-hand. *The Fantastic Mirror-SF Across The Ages (Panthenon 1969)*

Isaac Asimov
Modern science fiction is the only form of literature that consistently considers the nature of the changes that face us, the possible consequences, and the possible solutions.
That branch of literature which is concerned with the impact of scientific advance upon human beings. *(1952)*

James O. Bailey
The touchstone for scientific fiction, then, is that it describes an imaginary invention or discovery in the natural sciences. The most serious pieces of this fiction arise from speculation about what may happen if science makes an extraordinary discovery. The romance is an attempt to anticipate this discovery and its impact upon society, and to foresee how mankind may adjust to the new condition.
Pilgrims Through Space and Time (New York, 1947)

Gregory Benford
SF is a controlled way to think and dream about the future. An integration of the mood and attitude of science (the objective universe) with the fears and hopes that spring from the unconscious. Anything that turns you and your social context, the social you, inside out. Nightmares and visions, always outlined by the barely possible.

Ray Bradbury
Science fiction is really sociological studies of the future, things that the writer believes are going to happen by putting two and two together.

John Boyd
Science fiction is story-telling, usually imaginative as distinct from realistic fiction, which poses the effects of current or extrapolated scientific discoveries, or a single discovery, on the behavior of individuals of society.
Mainstream fiction gives imaginative reality to probable events within a framework of the historical past or present; science fiction gives reality to possible events, usually in the future, extrapolated from present scientific knowledge or existing cultural and social trends. Both genres ordinarily observe the unities and adhere to a cause-and-effect schema.

Reginald Bretnor
Science Fiction: fiction based on rational speculation regarding the human experience of science and its resultant technologies

[Science Fiction is:] a subdivision of fantastic literature which employs science or rationalism to create an appearance of plausibility *Posted to the mailing list SF-LIT, May 16, 1996*

John Brunner

As its best, SF is the medium in which our miserable certainty that tomorrow will be different from today in ways we can't predict, can be transmuted to a sense of excitement and anticipation, occasionally evolving into awe. Poised between intransigent skepticism and uncritical credulity, it is *par excellence* the literature of the open mind.

John W. Campbell, Jr.

The major distinction between fantasy and science fiction is, simply, that science fiction uses one, or a very, very few new postulates, and develops the rigidly consistent logical consequences of these limited postulates. Fantasy makes its rules as it goes along...The basic nature of fantasy is "The only rule is, make up a new rule any time you need one!" The basic rule of science fiction is "Set up a basic proposition--then develop its consistent, logical consequences."
Introduction, Analog 6, Garden City, New York, 1966

Terry Carr

Science Fiction is literature about the future, telling stories of the marvels we hope to see--or for our descendants to see--tomorrow, in the next century, or in the limitless duration of time.
Introduction, Dream's Edge, Sierra Club Books, San Francisco, 1980

Groff Conklin

The best definition of science fiction is that it consists of stories in which one or more definitely scientific notion or theory or actual discovery is extrapolated, played with, embroidered on, in a non-logical, or fictional sense, and thus carried beyond the realm of the immediately possible in an effort to see how much fun the author and reader can have exploring the imaginary outer reaches of a given idea's potentialities.

Edmund Crispin

A science fiction story is one which presupposes a technology, or an effect of technology, or a disturbance in the natural order, such as humanity, up to the time of writing, has not in actual fact experienced.
Best Science Fiction Stories (London, 1955)

L. Sprague De Camp

Therefore, no matter how the world makes out in the next few centuries, a large class of readers at least will not be too surprised at anything. They will have been through it all before in fictional form, and will not be too paralyzed with astonishment to try to cope with contingencies as they arise

Lester Del Rey

... science fiction "is the myth-making principle of human nature today."

Gordon R. Dickson

In short, the straw of a manufactured realism with which the sf writer makes his particular literary bricks must be entirely convincing to the reader in its own right, or the whole story will lose its power to convince.

H. Bruce Franklin

We talk a lot about science fiction as extrapolation, but in fact most science fiction does not extrapolate seriously. Instead it takes a willful, often whimsical, leap into a world spun out of the fantasy of the author … In fact, one good working definition of science fiction may be the literature which, growing with science and technology, evaluates it and relates it meaningfully to the rest of human existence.

Northrop Frye

Science fiction frequently tries to imagine what life would be like on a plane as far above us as we are above savagery; its setting is often of a kind that appears to us technologically miraculous. It is thus a mode of romance with a strong tendency to myth.

Vincent H. Gaddis

Science fiction expresses the dreams that, varied and modified, later becomes the visions and then the realities in scientific progress. Unlike fantasy they present probabilities in their basic structure and create a reservoir of imaginative thought that sometimes can inspire more practical thinking.

Hugo Gernsback

By "scientification,"... I mean the Jules Verne, H. G. Wells, and Edgar Allan Poe type of story---a charming romance intermingled with scientific fact and prophetic vision.

Amit Goswami

Science Fiction is that class of fiction which contains the currents of change in science and society. It concerns itself with the critique, extension, revision, and conspiracy of revolution, all directed against static scientific paradigms. Its goal is to prompt a paradigm shift to a new view that will be more responsive and true to nature.
The Cosmic Dancers (New York, 1983

James E. Gunn

Science Fiction is the branch of literature that deals with the effects of change on people in the real world as it can be projected into the past, the future, or to distant places. It often concerns itself with scientific or technological change, and it usually involves matters whose importance is greater than the individual or the community; often civilization or the race itself is in danger.
Introduction, The Road To Science Fiction, Vol 1, NEL, New York 1977

Gerald Heard

Science fiction in the hand of character-draughtsman can create a new contemporary tension-of-choice, new moral decisions, and so indicate how they may be faced or flunked. In its [science fiction's] aim it is bound, by its extrapolation of science and its use of dramatic plot, to view man and his machines and his environment as a three-fold whole, the machine being the hyphen. It also views man's psyche, man's physique and the entire life process as also a threefold interacting unit. Science fiction is the prophetic ... the apocalyptic literature of our particular culminating epoch of crisis.

Robert A. Heinlein

A handy short definition of almost all science fiction might read: realistic speculation about possible future events, based solidly on adequate knowledge of the real world, past and present, and on a thorough understanding of the nature and significance of the scientific method. To make this definition cover all science fiction (instead of "almost all") it is necessary only to strike out the word "future."
from: Science Fiction: its nature, faults and virtues, in The Science Fiction Novel, Advent, Chicago:1969
****

Science Fiction is speculative fiction in which the author takes as his first postulate the real world as we know it, including all established facts and natural laws. The result can be extremely fantastic in content, but it is not fantasy; it is legitimate--and often very tightly reasoned--speculation about the possibilities of the real world. This category excludes rocket ships that make U-turns, serpent men of Neptune that lust after human maidens, and stories by authors who flunked their Boy Scout merit badge tests in descriptive astronomy.
from: Ray Guns And Spaceships, in Expanded Universe, Ace, 1981

Frank Herbert

Science fiction represents the modern heresy and the cutting edge of speculative imagination as it grapples with Mysterious Time---linear or non-linear time.
Our motto is *Nothing Secret, Nothing Sacred.*

Damon Knight

What we get from science fiction---what keeps us reading it, in spite of our doubts and occasional disgust---is not different from the thing that makes mainstream stories rewarding, but only expressed differently. We live on a minute island of known things. Our undiminished wonder at the mystery which surrounds us is what makes us human. In science fiction we can approach that mystery, not in small, everyday symbols, but in bigger ones of space and time.

Sam J. Lundwall

A simplified definition would be that the author of a "straight" science fiction story proceeds from (or alleges to proceed from) known facts, developed in a credible way...

Sam Moskowitz

Science fiction is a branch of fantasy identifiable by the fact that it eases the "willing suspension of disbelief" on the part of its readers by utilizing an atmosphere of scientific credibility for its imaginative speculations in physical science, space, time, social science, and philosophy.

Alexei Panshin

Facts and a concern with change are the stuff that science fiction is made of; science fiction that ignores facts and change can be made less frightening and more popular, but inasmuch as it is superficial, stupid, false-to-fact, timid foolish or dull, it is minor in another and more important way, and it is certainly bad as science fiction.

... its [science fiction's] attraction lies ... in the unique opportunity it offers for placing familiar things in unfamiliar contexts, and unfamiliar things in familiar contexts, thereby yielding fresh insights and perspective.

Frederik Pohl

The future depicted in a good SF story ought to be in fact possible, or at least plausible. That means that the writer should be able to convince the reader (and himself) that the wonders he is describing really can come true...and that gets tricky when you take a good, hard look at the world around you.
The Shape of Things to Come and Why It Is Bad, SFC, December 1991
****

If anyone were to force me to make a thumbnail description of the differences between SF and fantasy, I think I would say that SF looks towards an imaginary future, while fantasy, by and large, looks towards an imaginary past. Both can be entertaining. Both can possibly be, perhaps sometimes actually are, even inspiring. But as we can't change the past, and can't avoid changing the future, only one of them can be real.
Pohlemic, SFC, May 1992
****

That's really what SF is all about, you know: the big reality that pervades the real world we live in: the reality of change. Science fiction is the very literature of change. In fact, it is the only such literature we have.
Pohlemic, SFC, May 1992
****

Does the story tell me something worth knowing, that I had not known before, about the relationship between man and technology? Does it enlighten me on some area of science where I had been in the dark? Does it open a new horizon for my thinking? Does it lead me to think new kinds of thoughts, that I would not otherwise perhaps have thought at all? Does it suggest possibilities about the alternative possible future courses my world can take? Does it illuminate events and trends of today, by showing me where they may lead tomorrow? Does it give me a fresh and objective point of view on my own world and culture, perhaps by letting me see it through the eyes of a different kind of creature entirely, from a planet light-years away? These qualities are not only among those which make science fiction good, they are what make it unique. Be it never so beautifully written, a story is not a good *science fiction* story unless it rates high in these aspects. The

content of the story is as valid a criterion as the style. *Introduction--SF:Contemporary Mythologies (New York, 1978)*

Eric S. Rabkin
A work belongs in the genre of science fiction if its narrative world is at least somewhat different from our own, and if that difference is apparent against the background of an organized body of knowledge.
The Fantastic In Literature (Princeton University Press, 1976)

Dick Riley
At its best, science fiction has no peer in creating another universe of experience, in showing us what we look like in the mirror of technological society or through the eyes of a non-human.
Critical Encounters (New York, 1978)

Thomas N. Scortia
... [science fiction has] the humanistic assumption that the laws of nature are amenable to the interpretation of human logic and, more than this, amenable to logical extrapolation.

Tom Shippey
A revealing way of describing science fiction is to say that it is part of a literary mode which one may call "fabril" "Fabril" is the opposite of "Pastoral". But while "the pastoral" is an established and much-discussed literary mode, recognized as such since early antiquity, its dark opposite has not yet been accepted, or even named, by the law-givers of literature. Yet the opposition is a clear one. Pastoral literature is rural, nostalgic, conservative. It idealizes the past and tends to convert complexities into simplicity; its central image is the shepherd. Fabril literature (of which science fiction is now by far the most prominent genre) is overwhelmingly urban, disruptive, future-oriented, eager for novelty; its central images is the "faber", the smith or blacksmith in older usage, but now extended in science fiction to mean the creator of artifacts in general--metallic, crystalline, genetic, or even social.
Introduction, The Oxford Book of Science Fiction, (Oxford, 1992)

Brian Stableford
True science fiction [is] fiction which attempts to build logically coherent imaginary worlds based on premises licensed by the world-view of contemporary science.
(very slight editing from his GOH speech, ConFuse 91)
Science fiction is essentially a kind of fiction in which people learn more about how to live in the real world, visiting imaginary worlds unlike our own, in order to investigate by way of pleasurable thought-experiments how things might be done differently.
(from his GOH speech, ConFuse 91)
****
What is authentic about genuine science fiction, is that the science fiction writer should not stop with just saying: Well, the plot needs this to happen, therefore I'll just do it and I'll invent an excuse for it being able to be done. Proper science fiction ought to require

people to begin to explore the consequences of what they've invented. And thus, I think that science fiction is, in a real sense, capable of being scientific. Not in the sense that it can foresee the future of science, but it can adopt a kind of variation of the scientific method itself, it does feel compelled to explore the consequences of hypotheses and the way things fit together. *(from an interview on Science in SF, ConFuse 91)*

Theodore Sturgeon
A science fiction story is a story built around human beings, with a human problem and a human solution, which would not have happened at all without its scientific content.
Definition given by: William Atheling Jr., (James Blish) in The issue at Hand: Studies in Contemporary Magazine Fiction (Chicago, 1964)

Darko Suvin
It [science fiction] should be defined as a fictional tale determined by the hegemonic literary device of a *locus* and/or *dramatis personae* that (1) are *radically or at least significantly different from empirical times, places, and characters* of "mimetic" or "naturalist" fiction, but (2) are nonetheless--to the extent that SF differs from other "fantastic" genres, that is, ensembles of fictional tales without empirical validation-- simultaneously perceived as *not impossible* within the cognitive (cosmological and anthropological) norms of the author's epoch.
Preface, Metamorphoses Of Science Fiction, (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1979)
SF is, then, a literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment.
Chapter 1, Metamorphoses Of Science Fiction, (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1979)

Alvin Toffler
By challenging anthropocentricism and temporal provincialism, science fiction throws open the whole of civilization and its premises to constructive criticism.

Jack Williamson
"Hard" science fiction ... probes alternative possible futures by means of reasoned extrapolations in much the same way that good historical fiction reconstructs the probable past. Even far-out fantasy can present a significant test of human values exposed to a new environment. Deriving its most cogent ideas from the tension between permanence and change, science fiction combines the diversions of novelty with its pertinent kind of realism.

Donald A. Wolleheim
Science fiction is that branch of fantasy, which, while not true to present-day knowledge, is rendered plausible by the reader's recognition of the scientific possibilities of it being possible at some future date or at some uncertain point in the past.
"The Universe Makers"

Appendix Q
Fan-Named Favorite Creators of the Genre

Last	First	Votes	Sub-genre	Gender	Medium
Heinlein	Robert	49	S	M	Book
Asimov	Isaac	27	S	M	Book
Niven	Larry	23	S	M	Book
Bujold	Lois McMaster	19	S	F	Book
Roddenberry	Gene	19	S	M	TV
Tolkien	JRR	16	F	M	Book
Bradbury	Ray	15	S	M	Book
Straczynski	J Michael	15	S	M	TV
Clarke	Arthur C	14	S	M	Book
Whedon	Joss	14	S/F	M	TV
Lucas	George	13	S	M	Film
McCaffrey	Anne	13	S	F	Book
Weber	David	13	S	M	Book
Gaiman	Neil	12	F	M	Book
Pratchett	Terry	11	F	M	Book
Miyazaki	Hayao	9	J	M	Anime
Spielberg	Steven	9	S	M	Film
Lackey	Mercedes	8	F	F	Book
Wells	HG	8	S	M	Book
Adams	Douglas	7	S	M	Book
Norton	Andre	7	S/F	F	Book
Robinson	Spider	7	S	M	Book
Verne	Jules	6	S	M	Book
Anderson	Poul	5	S	M	Book
Bradley	Marian Zimmer	5	S	M	Book
Cherryh	CJ	5	S	F	Book
Freas	Kelly	5	S	M	Art
NONE		5			
Rowling	JK	5	F	F	Book
Too Many		5			
Brin	David	4	S	M	Book
King	Stephen	4	Horror	M	Book
Mather	Theresa	4	F	F	Art
Pournelle	Jerry	4	S	M	Book
Stirling	SM	4	S	M	Book

Turtledove	Harry	4	S	M	Book
Barnes	Steven	3	S	M	Book
Bear	Greg	3	S	M	Book
Briggs	Patricia	3	F	F	Book
Dawe	Sue	3	F	F	Art
Drake	David	3	S/F	M	Book
Fforde	Jaspar	3	F	M	Book
Flint	Eric	3	S	M	Book
Foster	Alan Dean	3	S	M	Book
Hambly	Barbara	3	F	F	Book
LeGuin	Ursula	3	S/F	F	Book
Lovecraft	HP	3	F	M	Book
Martin	George RR	3	S/F	M	Book
Meyer	Stephenie	3	F	F	Book
Moon	Elizabeth	3	F	F	Book
Pohl	Frederick	3	S	M	Book
Powers	Tim	3	S/F	M	Book
Scalzi	John	3	S	M	Book
Stephenson	Neal	3	S	M	Book
Vinge	Vernor	3	S	M	Book
Whelan	Michael	3	S/F	M	Art
Willis	Connie	3	S	F	Book
Abrams	JJ	2	S	M	TV
Anthony	Piers	2	F	M	Book
Baen	Jim	2	S/F	M	Publishing
Baxter	Stephen	2	S	M	Book
Brust	Steven	2	F	M	Book
Burton	Tim	2	F	M	Film
Butcher	Jim	2	F	M	Book
Butler	Octavia	2	S/F	F	Book
Card	Orson Scott	2	S	M	Book
Carroll	Lewis	2	F	M	Book
David	Peter	2	C	M	Comics
Davies	Russell	2	S	M	TV
de Lint	Charles	2	F	M	Book
Dick	Philip K.	2	S	M	Book
Doctorow	Cory	2	S	M	Book
Doyle	Arthur Conan	2	S	M	Book
Eddings	David	2	F	M	Book

Egan	Greg	2	S	M	Book
Ellison	Harlan	2	S	M	Book
Foglio	Phil & Kaja	2	C	M/F	Comics
Gibson	William	2	S	M	Book
Hamilton	Laurel K	2	F	F	Book
Howard	Robert E	2	F	M	Book
Jordan	Robert	2	F	M	Book
Kay	Guy Gavriel	2	F	M	Book
Kubrick	Stanley	2	S	M	Film
Nix	Garth	2	F	M	Book
Stross	Charles	2	S	M	Book
Thomas	Nene	2	F	F	Art
Varley	John	2	S	M	Book
Wynne Jones	Diana	2	F	F	Book
Zahn	Timothy	2	S	M	Book
Zelazny	Roger	2	F	M	Book
Arakwa	Hiromu	1	F	M	Manga
Asama	Tezuka	1	An	M	Anime
Asaro	Catherine	1	S	F	Book
Aspirin	Robert Lynn	1	F	M	Book
Austen	Jane	1	L	F	Book
Baker	Kage	1	S	F	Book
Bakshi	Ralph	1	F	M	Animation
Baxa	Tom	1	A	M	Art
Beagle	Peter	1	F	M	Book
Bellasario	Donald	1	S	M	TV
Blish	James	1	S	M	Book
Bova	Ben	1	S	M	Book
Brooks	Terry	1	F	M	Book
Bull	Emma	1	F	F	Book
Cameron	James	1	S	M	Film
Campbell	John W	1	S	M	Publishing
Carey	Jacqueline	1	F	F	Book
Cartier	Edd	1	S	M	Art
Chance	Karen	1	F	F	Book
Colfer	Eion	1	F	M	Book
Craft	Kinuko	1	F	F	Art
D'Ambrosio	Michael	1	S	M	Book
DaVinci	Leonardo	1	S/F	M	All

de Chancie	John	1	S/F	M	Book
Delaney	Samuel R	1	S	M	Book
Dickson	Gordon	1	S	M	Book
Donaldson	Stephen	1	F	M	Book
Douglas	Ian	1	S	M	Book
Duane	Diane	1	S/F	F	Book
Effinger	George Alec	1	S	M	Book
Ellis	Warren	1	S	M	Book
Feehan	Christine	1	F	F	Book
Forward	RL	1	S	M	Book
Friesner	Esther	1	F	F	Book
Gardmer	James Alan	1	S	M	Book
Gerrold	David	1	S	M	Book
Giancala	Donato	1	S/F	M	Art
Gilliam	Terry	1	F	M	Book
Harris	Charlaine	1	M	F	Book
Heath	Russ	1	C	M	Comics
Henson	Jim	1	F	M	TV
Hickman	Stephen	1	S/F	M	Art
Hickman	Tracy	1	F	F	Book
Howard	Jonathan L	1	S/F	M	Book
Huff	Tanya	1	F	F	Book
Hunter	Erin	1	F	F	Book
Ishinomori	Shotaro	1	J	M	Manga
Johns	Geoff	1	C	M	Comics
Kenyan	Sherrilyn	1	F	F	Book
Kenyan	Kay	1	S	F	Book
Kidd	Paul	1	F	M	Book
Kuttner	Henry	1	H	M	Book
Lee	Stan	1	F	M	Comics
Leiber	Fritz	1	S	M	Book
Leinstar	Murray	1	S	M	Book
Lem	Stanislaw	1	S	M	Book
Lewis	CS	1	F	M	Book
Lindelof	David	1	S	M	TV
Lockwood	Todd	1	A	M	Art
Mamaru	Oshii	1	J	M	Anime
McDevitt	Jack	1	S	M	Book
McKinley	Robin	1	F	F	Book

Meiville	China Tom	1	F	M	Book
Mignola	Mike	1	F	M	Comics
Moorcock	Michael	1	S	M	Book
Moore	Alan	1	C	M	Comics
Morrow	James	1	S	M	Book
Noon	Jeff	1	F	M	Book
Pal	George	1	S	M	Film
Pierce	Tamora	1	F	F	Book
Piercy	Marge	1	S	F	Book
Pini	Wendy	1	F	F	Book
Piper	H Beam	1	S	M	Book
Rule	Ann	1	M	F	Book
Russell	Eric F	1	S	M	Book
Sawyer	Robert	1	S	M	Book
Shirow	Masamune	1	J	M	Manga
Silverberg	Robert	1	S	F	Book
Smith	EE "Doc"	1	S	M	Book
Stapledon	Olaf	1	S	M	Book
Stewart	Larry	1		M	Art
Sturgeon	Theodore	1	S	M	Book
Takahiro	Kimura	1	J	M	Anime
Tarantino	Quentin	1		M	Film
Tennant	David	1	S	M	Actor
van Vogt	AE	1	S	M	Book
Vaughn	Carrie	1	F	F	Book
Watt-Evans	Lawrence	1	S/F	M	Book
Weis	Margaret	1	F	F	Book
William	John	1	S/F	M	Music
Wilson	Robert Charles	1	S	M	Book
Boucher	Anthony	1	S	M	Book
Andrews	Christopher	1	S/F	M	Book
Mathison	Richard	1	S/F	M	Book
Burroughs	Edgar Rice	1	S	M	Book
Barrowcliff	Mark	1	Bio	M	Book
Froud	Brian	1	F	M	Art
Banks	Iain	1	S	M	Book

Appendix R
Bibliographies for Guests of Honor

Steve Barnes

Fiction Series
Aubrey Knight
      1 *Streetlethal* (1983)
      2 *Gorgon Child* (1989)
      3 *Firedance* (1993)
Bilalistan
      1 *Lion's Blood* (2002)
      2 *Zulu Heart* (2003)
Dream Park
      1 *Dream Park* (1981) with Larry Niven
      2 *The Barsoom Project* (1989) with Larry Niven
      3 *The Voodoo Game* (1991) with Larry Niven also appeared as:
            Variant Title: *The California Voodoo Game* (1992)
      4 *The Moon Maze Game* [forthcoming: Aug 16 2011] with Larry Niven
Heorot
      1 *The Legacy of Heorot* (1987) with Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle
      2 *Beowulf's Children* (1995) with Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle also appeared as:
            Variant Title: *The Dragons of Heorot* (1995)
Star Trek Universe
      Star Trek: Deep Space Nine
            Far Beyond the Stars (1998)
Star Wars Universe
      Star Wars: Clone Wars
            The Hive (2004) [SF]
            The Cestus Deception (2004)
Novels
The Descent of Anansi (1982) with Larry Niven
The Kundalini Equation (1986)
Achilles' Choice (1991) with Larry Niven
Blood Brothers (1996)
Iron Shadows (1998)
Saturn's Race (2000) with Larry Niven
Charisma (2002)
Great Sky Woman (2006)
Shadow Valley (2009)
Collections
Assassin and Other Stories (2010)
Short Fiction Series

Magic Goes Away
  ". . . but fear itself" (1981)

Horseclans Universe
  Friends of the Horseclans
    Yelloweye (1987)
    Killsister (1989)

Short Fiction

The Locusts (1979) with Larry Niven
Retrospective (1980) with Larry Niven
Endurance Vile (1980)
The Descent of Anansi (Excerpt) (1982) with Larry Niven
From The Legacy of Heorot (excerpt) (1987) with Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle
The Legacy of Heorot (excerpt) (1987) with Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle
Dream Park: The Voodoo Game: Nakagawa's Law (excerpt) (1992) with Larry Niven
Sand Man (1995)
The Music Between the Notes (1999)
The Woman in the Wall (2000)
Lion's Blood (excerpt) (2002)
Heartspace (2003)
Saturn's Race (Excerpt) (2003) with Larry Niven
Danger Word (2004) with Tananarive Due

Essays

Afterword (Dream Park) (1981) with Larry Niven
Afterword (The Barsoom Project) (1989) with Larry Niven
Cast of Characters and Glossary (The Barsoom Project) (1989) with Larry Niven
Dancing on the Wire (Science Fiction Review, Spring 1990) (1990)
Dancing on the Wire (Science Fiction Review, Summer 1990) (1990)
Dancing on the Wire (Science Fiction Review, Autumn 1990) (1990)
On Niven (1990)
Dream Park (excerpt) (1992) with Larry Niven
Selected Dramatis Personae (The Voodoo Game) (1992) with Larry Niven
Afterword (The Voodoo Game) (1992) with Larry Niven
Steven Barnes on Larry Niven (1992)
Afterword (The California Voodoo Game) (1993) with Larry Niven
On Niven (1998) with Gregory Benford and Wendy Ali and John Hertz and David Brin and Frederik Pohl
Author's Note: Why I decided To Write a Book in a Month; Or, How Star Trek Changed My Life (1998)
Afterword (The Cestus Deception) (2004)
Afterword (The Cestus Deception) (2005)
 For Octavia: A Remembrance of My Friend and Neighbor (2006)

Fiction Series
My Soul to Keep
      1 *My Soul to Keep* (1997)
      2 *The Living Blood* (2001)
      3 *Blood Colony* (2008)
Novels
The Between (1995)
The Good House (2003)
Joplin's Ghost (2005)
Anthologies
The Ancestors (2008) with Brandon Massey and L. A. Banks
Shortfiction
Suffer The Little Children (2000)
Like Daughter (2000)
Patient Zero (2000)
Trial Day (2003)
Danger Word (2004) with Steven Barnes
Aftermoon (2004)
Upstairs (2006)
Señora Suerte (2006)
Summer (2007)
Amusement (2007)
Ghost Summer (2008)
Essays
Foreword (Havoc After Dark: Tales of Terror) (2004)
Reviews
Throat Sprockets: A Novel of Erotic Obsession (2005) by Tim Lucas

Appendix S
Representative Genre Works and Further Academic Reading

Below is a list of texts used for historical references or as examples of types of text within a category. They are made available here for your reference or future enjoyment; therefore, in general, only items that are accessible have been listed. The publication data that has been provided is either from my own personal copy of the work or from the most recent edition I could find listed online. In the case of series, the origination date is given.

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