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## 5 Cons – A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Fandom Documentary

I'll be doing an issue of Claims Department in a bit about the specifics of each of the cons we'll be shooting at, but you should think about helping us to make this doc about what fandom is today! Go to <http://www.indiegogo.com/projects/5-cons-a-21st-century-fandom-documentary> to find out how to help us make it happen.

We want to give an idea of what fandom is today and we're using the five major cons we're going to this year to tell that story. We plan on doing a section on Fanzines and Fanzinistas in the episode where we look at WesterCon, where I'll be running the Fanzine Lounge. We'll be looking at Nova Albion, ConQuest, WesterCon, WorldCon, and World Fantasy. We'll be shooting tons of interviews and b-roll and have brought Alissa McKersie and James Bacon on-board to help us out with Europe. I hope y'all help us out because we're hoping to document fandom in all of its flavors!



## TAFF Voting!

If you haven't already, you gotta vote in the current TAFF Race! <http://taff.org.uk/ballots/taff2013.html> is where you can find the ballot! It's Theresa Derwin vs. Jim Mowatt. I think either would be awesome, so it's another no-lose situation, but I'm a nominator for Theresa!

Now, if you haven't been reading Andromeda's Offspring, Theresa's fine zine, available at <http://efanzines.com/AndOff/index.htm> and the recent Steampunk issue is awesome! She's put together a fine Steampunk zine and it's better than most of my takes on Steampunk! In particular, there's words from K.W. Jeter and Adriane Middleton's piece on what is Steampunk is a very good introduction. I did a Steampunk issue back in 2005 and this one takes a completely different tack. It has a great look at a bunch of wonderful books, both current and long-ago. There's fiction and wonderfulness! I totally recommend this one for your reading pleasure!

If you want more on Theresa's run for the Delegatecy, you can read more at <http://efanzines.com/AndOff/TheresaForTaff-03.pdf>.

You can also find more on Jim's race at <http://efanzines.com/TinyTaff/index.htm>.  
Vote, damn you!!!!



# ETERNAL PROGRESS: FANDOM AND TECHNOLOGY – II

## DAVID B. WILLIAMS

In the first installment, I reviewed the evolving technologies of fanzine duplication and fan transportation and considered how these developments affected fandom. Developments in communication and the entertainment media have also influenced fandom for better or worse.

### **Communication**

The Victorian Age was the classic age of letter writing. Fandom experienced its own Victorian Age in the years before fanzines emerged and multiplied. One function of those newfangled fanzines was to serve as letter substitutes, allowing their editors to discuss fannish affairs without having to repeat themselves several times in personal letters.

Fanzines also quickly developed letter columns. A letter of comment published in a fanzine allowed the writer to broadcast his views across fandom without expending the scarce nickels and dimes in his pocket for paper, envelopes, and postage.

Telegraphy didn't play a developmental role in fandom, but it did fulfill one practical need. You could send a telegram to a recipient and it would be delivered as a document, something that could be handed to a meeting chairman and read to the audience (you couldn't do that with a telephone call).

Astounding editor John Campbell sent a 700-word telegram to the third eastern convention when he couldn't attend, and it was read from the podium. Many more-laconic telegrams conveyed greetings from distant fans to early Worldcons. Martians telegraphed greetings to the 1940 Denvention, or so the telegram claimed.

Telephones played little part in fan communication beyond the local community (or even within, considering how many homes lacked phones in the 1930s and 1940s). Because of the expense, long-distance calls were reserved for the most urgent business or family news. Don Wollheim in NYC did call Milt Rothman in Philadelphia to discuss arrangements for the first convention in 1936. But no one called their distant fannish friends just to chat them up, as happens now.

ART FROM MICHELE WILSON

That began to change in the 1960s. Lower rates, better voice transmission, and direct dialing increased fannish telephone traffic, especially in areas with large but dispersed fan populations such as southern California and NYC.

The widespread adoption of mobile phone technologies has increased the immediacy of fandom. Fan events (and photos) can be shared instantly with fans not present. It's now a lot easier to locate friends at huge conventions, if you have their cell number. Can the widespread adoption of Twitter mean that hourly, 140-character fanzines are inevitable?

Fans might talk even more often on the telephone, except for the introduction of the no-cost Internet. SF and fannish discussion lists began around 1990 on services such as Genie and CompuServe. Today, Internet discussion sites on every conceivable topic are myriad, every convention has a Web site (as do many individual fans), and most fanzines are produced and distributed online, competing feebly with blogs for reader attention.

Computers and the Internet have created a totally New Age in fan communication and permitted the emergence, it might be argued, of modern Mass Fandom.

## **Entertainment media**

In the beginning – say, when H. G. Wells published *The Time Machine* – there was only print – books and magazines. Illustration was used to give life to otherwise static pages of text. Then came movies, radio, television, and video gaming.

The dramatic evolution of the entertainment media has changed the very nature of fandom. Indeed, every fan can now be considered a media fan, because even devoted SF readers also enjoy SF movies and TV shows. Is there a fan with a DVD player who doesn't own at least a small collection of SF/F movies?

Motion pictures date back more than a century, well before the birth of fandom. But we need to consider motion pictures and television together, for reasons I will explain.

It wasn't long after the birth of moving pictures as an entertainment medium that major SF films such as *Metropolis* appeared. But Hollywood's attention seemed to wander in the following decades, except for the weekly movie serials featuring *Flash Gordon*. After the newsreels, cartoons, and serials, the big screen featured fantasy tales of vampires, werewolves, and mummies.

Then, in post-war 1950, things picked up with the release of *Destination Moon*, a movie featuring actual rocket ships. But this purer form of predictive SF was soon overwhelmed by fear of atomic radiation and the giant mutations it might induce. SF remained in the fight with serious contenders such as *When Worlds Collide*, *Forbidden Planet*, *War of the Worlds*.

But none of these film dramas had much impact on fandom, for all that Forry Ackerman might jump up and down and wave his arms. SF movies were convenient to screen at conventions, where audiences needed to be entertained and programs needed to be enhanced with something in addition to speeches. *The Day the Earth Stood Still* did have one little ping of an impact: the phrase "Klaatu borada nikto" became a fannish catchphrase.

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Then, enter television. TV seems to be nothing more than moving pictures in a box, exhibited in the viewer's home instead of a theater. But TV has characteristics that differ profoundly from film. Unlike movies, which are kind of a one-time thing, TV shows are broadcast every week. TV shows can create a following because viewers can tune in again and again. TV series are repeated, first as post-season reruns and then in syndication, when they can often be viewed daily.

TV shows can induce a form of conditioned reflex. Something about a program appeals to the viewer. The viewer returns again the following week to gain the same reward. Repeated rewards soon make the program habitual, and the viewer is converted into a dedicated fan of the program. Thus the power of endorphins, and television.

Early television featured some good SF in anthology shows such as *The Twilight Zone* and *Outer Limits*.

There were kid shows like Captain Video and Tom Corbett: Space Cadet. I'm not sure how to classify Lost In Space. These SF offerings attracted attention and were popular, but they didn't engender mass fan followings.

Then something happened. In 1966, Star Trek premiered. The program only lasted three years in its first incarnation. The sets were cheesy, the production values minimal, the messages of various episodes rather obvious. But this weekly TV series ignited fan devotion. On the positive side, Star Trek was real SF, not talking horses or magic genies.

Perhaps TV provided the precipitating conditions but, not long after Star Trek, movies finally caught fire. SF films such as 2001 and Star Wars awakened the public's imagination and were big hits. The Star Wars franchise finally managed to create a fan base of its own, like Star Trek, with conventions, costuming, and fan fiction. More blockbusters followed, and hordes of media fans were added to SF fandom.

The advent of home video players and video cassettes, now supplanted by DVDs, gave a strong boost to media fandom. At last, it was possible to watch your favorite movies over and over without paying theater prices and to view old films at home instead of at film festivals. Media fans could become collectors, just like their print predecessors.

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Radio, like the early silver screen, had little impact on SF fandom. Orson Welles' War of the Worlds broadcast in 1938 made news in the Real World but attracted only passing notice from fandom. Radio shows such as Buck Rogers and Space Cadet did not lead to the birth of sub-fandoms. In the 1970s, SF did find a new role on radio with leading writers appearing as frequent guests on some late-night talk shows.

Wire and tape recorders were used to record some Worldcon programs, and audio fanzines were attempted. But the absence of tape recorders in most homes and the difficulty and cost of duplicating sound recordings kept them a niche interest in fandom.

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One other entertainment medium, gaming, has achieved a widespread influence on fandom. Fans have always played games, but these were long limited to chess, word games, and smoke-filled convention poker sessions. Then TV was cross-bred with the computer chip, and video gaming exploded in popularity, enlarging and distracting traditional fandom in many ways.

Add the Internet, and gaming became an interactive and international phenomenon. Then gaming jumped



into bed with movies. New games were based on hit SF/F movies and new movies were based on popular games.

Many video and Internet games have fantasy and SF themes, which may be the only explanation for why gaming has become such a distinctive part of contemporary fandom. Today, gaming is an integral part of almost every "SF" convention, with gaming rooms and live-action role-playing games conducted in and around the hotel.

## **Cyberfandom**

I outlined the dramatic effects of computers and the Internet on

fanzines in the first installment and noted the explosion of online communication above. But the influence of digital technologies on fandom has been far more pervasive.

Aside from club meetings and conventions, many fans now devote most of their fanac to posting comments to Web sites and online discussion lists. This may be one reason for a reduction in letters of comment to fanzines. The immediacy of the Internet satisfies the need for self-expression and consumes the time formerly devoted to writing locs.

Something should also be said about wordage. Since a letter of comment to a fanzine is going to appear in print, loccers tend to feel that they should say something substantive. Also, loccers feel an obligation to comment on most of a fanzine's content. All this amounts to composing an essay, is vaguely daunting, and takes time. But discussion-list participants can zap off a seven-word comment, including three typos, and be done with it. Discussion-list fanac is more like a social event or conversation rather than literary composition.

When the World Wide Web became available, web sites arose to further draw writers, readers, and loccers away from traditional fanzines. New postings can be made every day, reach the site's audience instantly, and enjoy immediate reader response, while fans wait weeks or months for the next issue of their favorite fanzine. Web sites were further enhanced by the ability to deliver sound and video content.

Web sites also compete directly with fanzines. Indeed, online news sites have extinguished one whole category of fanzine, the newszine. Traditional paper newszines couldn't compete with the daily updates and free, universal availability of online news.

Consternation and controversy arose when Hugo nominations for Best Fanzine began to include Web sites. Web sites won the fanzine Hugo in 2009, 2010, and 2012.

Then, at the 2012 Worldcon business session, aroused fanzine traditionalists won a vote, refining the eligibility rules for the fanzine Hugo to ensure that only actual fanzines would be considered in future years. A separate award, Best Fancast, was inaugurated for fan-produced Web content.

The Internet has also enabled a number of fan projects that would have been unachievable in the bygone days of snail mail, typers, and stencils. Perhaps the best example is Fancyclopedia 3. When Fancy 2 was published in 1959 as the product of one creator, Dick Eney, it was considered a prodigy.

No doubt many fans in the following decades recognized the need for an expanded and updated edition, but all quailed before such a monumental task. Then wiki software came along, and any number of fans could make large or small contributions to a new, online edition. Today, Fancy 3 boasts more than 4,000 entries and grows a little more each day.

The Vance Integral Edition is a 44-volume collection of all Jack Vance's works, restored and corrected from his original manuscripts and other resources. This monumental, and international, project was conducted entirely via the Internet. Hundreds of volunteers around the world were involved, exchanging files and e-mails, an impossible task before the advent of the Internet.

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Over the broad sweep of fanhistory, three factors have had a profound influence on the development and advancement of fandom: fanzines, conventions, and the Internet. Fanzines gave fandom mass communication, evolving into genzines, clubzines, personalzines, and newszines. For 50 years, fandom was sustained and dominated by paper fanzines.

Then, in the 1980s, thanks to improvements in income and transportation, conventions assumed the leading role in fan activity. Even the hardcore fanzine fans capitulated and began staging their own cons.

Today, the average denizen of Mass Fandom may attend several conventions each year but not read a single fanzine, instead acquiring news and participating in discussions online. Fandom's very nature and make-up have been dramatically altered by the explosion in conventions and by the introduction of electronics, from TV to Internet-linked computers.

Like every other aspect of life, fandom has been shaped by the enormous post-War advances in technology. Some fans regret these changes, but many others would never have become involved, or remained active, without them.



In recent years, the field of Comics Studies has exploded. Back in the 1970s, when my older brother occasionally drove me to Bob Sidebottom's Comic Collector Shop on San Fernando Street in San Jose, the only widely available explorations were Jules Feiffer's *The Great Comic Book Heroes*, Steranko's two volume *History of Comics*, and Michael Fleisher's *Encyclopedia of Comic Book Heroes* compiled over three tomes that covered Batman, Wonder Woman, and Superman respectively. Fans could also gather information from any number of fanzines, journals, and the grapevines operating at conventions. How times have changed.

Now a legion of authors has joined the discussion. Gerard Jones, who in the 1980s penned *The Comic Book Heroes: The First History of Modern Comic Books from the Silver Age to the Present*, has outlined the Golden Age in *Men of Tomorrow: Geeks, Gangsters, and the Birth of the Comic Book*. David Hajdu expounds on the dark days during the 1950s when senate hearings nearly ruined comics forever in *The Ten-Cent Plague: The Great Comic Book Scare and How It Changed America*. Of course, Grant Morrison has something to say with his *Supergods: What Masked Vigilantes, Miraculous Mutants, and a Sun God from Smallville Can Teach Us about Being Human*. Finally, I'm fond of *The Comic Book History of Comics* by Fred Van Lente and Ryan Dunlavey. This list represents just a drop in the deluge, as universities have started offering courses in Comics Studies and various academic presses have begun producing series dedicated to comic artists and criticism. To see more, I invite you to peruse my bibliography on the NerdVana Podcast website that while far from exhaustive -- since I haven't included journal articles and surely have missed quite a few titles -- shows the breadth of interest in this fascinating subject:

<http://nerdvanapodcast.com/comics-studies-bibliography-by-two-buck-chuck/>.

So, given the above, how can Sean Howe claim that his historical survey of Marvel Comics represents the "untold story?" Taken individually, none of the anecdotes he relates will strike experienced fans as new. They've heard these told time and again in various settings and formats. Stan Lee has lectured on the "Marvel method" at public appearances, in documentaries, in magazines and newspapers, in his autobiography, and in the introductory essays he wrote for anthologies such as *Origins of Marvel Comics*. And while I'm in the mood for cataloging titles,

how about those efforts chronicling events from specific eras in the saga of Marvel, such as *Comic Wars: Marvel's Battle for Survival* by Dan Raviv and Stan Lee and *Jack Kirby: The Wonder Years* by Mark Alexander? Don't start with these, however. Begin with Howe, because he gives us the untold story.

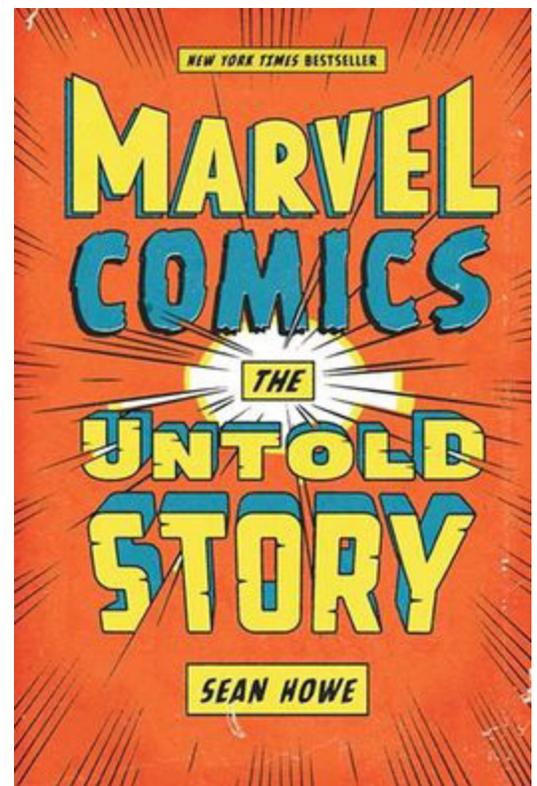
The untold story begins in 1939, when publisher Martin Goodman released the first issue of *Marvel Comics* through one of his imprints, Timely. The story ends . . . well, we don't know when the end will happen, but Howe's narrative ends with the Marvel of today, the subsidiary of Disney currently releasing hit after hit into movie houses in front of which fans like me line up like crack addicts whose collective survival depends on the whims of their pusher. The untold story, then, is the whole story, organized in such a way that allows readers to appreciate how the Marvel phenomenon has developed through time, through alternating editorial styles, through the aftermath of Wertham's *Seduction of the Innocent* and later corporate finagling, and through the infighting that stemmed from copyright disputes and clashes in creative outlooks. In all, Howe interviewed more than 150 individuals who worked for Marvel or one of its parent companies, finally uniting all this information for the first time into a singular source that recounts the evolution of Marvel without any photographs, reproductions of comic art, or miscellaneous illustrations. *The Marvel Comics: The Untold Story* page on Facebook features the visuals missing from the book, so click "like" to view the collection there.

While not strictly the focus of his study, Howe wisely joins the disparate portions of his book within a framework based on a balanced consideration of the copyright issues that have plagued not only Marvel but the entire comics industry. Simon, Kirby, Ditko, and others certainly suffered from unfair work-for-hire practices, while Jim Lee, Todd MacFarlane, and especially Rob Liefeld represented the excesses of the creator-owned side of the spectrum. Howe avoids any hero worship in describing Stan Lee's role in disputes with Kirby and Ditko as well. The Shooter years, the rise of the new X-Men, the bankruptcy battle in the 1990s, the periods of layoffs, all the ups and downs receive careful analysis. Howe even discusses the editorial processes behind the deaths of Gwen Stacy, Captain Marvel, and Jean Grey. What a great starting place for those who maybe have seen the films and thus have become curious about Marvel Comics in terms of history and business.

What a great nucleus of joy for seasoned fans as well. I found myself drowning in nostalgia for the late 1960s through the 1970s when artists and writers like Jim Steranko, Frank Brunner, Steve Gerber, Steve Englehart, Gary Friedrich, Marv Wolfman, Gene Colan, and Jim Starlin all worked and played together, releasing unto the world boundary-shattering comic books that forever changed not only the industry but the lives of fans everywhere. I, for example, happily endured ridicule for naming a new cat after my favorite Starlin character,

Adam Warlock. My sister to this day expresses relief, since during said christening I was wearing my Howard the Duck T-Shirt and easily could have gone in that direction.

Even with all this wonderfulness, a few small factual flaws regarding characters caused the occasional flinch. Howe describes Galactus as being only "twenty feet tall" and muddles the origin of Tigr. One can imagine that dedicated soul who while in the middle of reading the first chapter stands up and shouts, "Damn you, Howe! The Golden Age Human Torch's last name has two m's in it!" I remain far more forgiving, even if Howe never so much as mentions the Son of Satan. Hopefully, I've said enough to convince all to read this book, but just in case, I'll let another Chuck, one with the last name of Klosterman, have the last word: "Exhaustively researched and artfully assembled, *Marvel Comics* is a historical exploration, a labor of love, and a living illustration of how the weirdest corners of the counterculture can sometimes become the culture-at-large."





# GALLIFREY ONE - CROWDED WITH LOVE

## CHRISTOPHER J GARCIA

It were St. Valentine's Day and Linda and I were on the road. We stopped at her parent's place, we enjoyed a fine meal of Beef Jerky and we went 30 miles in 2.5 hours. Not the most romantic V-day in history, but anytime I get to be with the woman of my dreams is a good one! We checked into the Four Points, headed to pick-up our badges, enjoyed some time with Deb and Ric Bretschneider, ran into my college friend Tim Davis, got some dinner and went back to the room. That was our first night, no fuss, no muss.

Gallifrey One is a Doctor Who convention. I like Doctor Who, quite a bit, but it's also not one of my primary fandoms. I enjoy the show, have met some of the former Doctors, have read a couple of the books, and love the audio dramas, but it's not like I know that much about the show. I was near constantly asking Linda "who is that?" I could tell she was annoyed by that, but I really had no idea. A lot of my friends are big time Whovians, and there are people I don't see except at Gally, so I really love the con.

There are, of course, some strange matters with Gally.

You see, it's a Fan-run con, but in a way it's a bit like a Creation con, largely about the guests signing and photos and such. It actually walks that line very very well. There's a LobbyCon focus to a lot of it. There's only one or two room parties a night, but there's a this huge gathering of people in the lobby, drinking and having a good time. I always feel sort of out of place, but I really enjoy just hanging out with these folks. I guess that makes me as fake a fakefan as there can be! Still, I'm glad to be a part of the scene! The other thing is they've got a great venue. The LAX Marriott is a wonderful place for a con of 1500 to 2000 even, and I've been to cons there over the years, LosCon mostly, but they also do AnimeLA and a few other

media-type cons (at least they did back in the day) and the layout is awesome, and a few years ago, it would have been perfect!

But then Doctor Who came back on the air!

Now, this is the 24<sup>th</sup> Gallifrey One, which means that it started either while the old version was still on the air, or right after it had been cancelled. Besides a brief comeback in 1996, Doctor Who wasn't on the air until 2005. That led to serious growth in the numbers attending Gally. This year, they had to cap membership, I think at 3200. To me, that's about 700 more than would be ideal for the space. To me, it was a bit crowded, and with the stars signing and taking photos, there were lines all over the place and that only made it feel a bit more crowded. The con needs one or two more spaces. The art show is tiny, which is a shame as there's a lot of Doctor Who art that's out there that would be great to get seen by more folks. A large, ballroom-sized room would be great to dedicate to lines and autographs and photos. That would make it less crowded.

But they're married to the LAX Marriott, and they've got all the space used!

Now, they did an amazing job with the space, but yeah, it was crowded. Would Gallifrey work at another hotel? Yeah, of course it would. In my eyes, the perfect hotel for it would be one of the big ones in Anaheim, but what can you do? I understand that they want to maintain that smaller, fan-run con feeling, to not go the way of the Creation media cons. I totally agree, but you can be both and still have a large con. I really think with the current Gallifrey concept, they could pull in 10K folks and bring in more big names, I bet.

So, what did I do at the con? Well, you can see some of it at <http://www.youtube.com/user/johnnyeponymous>. I love making these little videos, which is partly what's inspired 5 Cons – A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Fandom Documentary Series. I basically enjoyed hanging out with my friends, going around making these silly videos and doing weird interviews. I did go to a couple of panels, including the Inspector Spacetime panel where I got to enjoy the depths of Community fandom. I hung out in the lobby and discovered the idea of Tea Dueling, where you use a tea biscuit and cup of tea to work a nerves of steal duel between two combatants! It's a lot of fun and I'll be bringing that to WorldCon with me! There was a Harlem Shake (You have heard of that, haven't you?) which I shot, and there was Mo Starkey who did a great panel and we chatted, and a Drink-making robot! I met some Podcasting folks, which is a big thing at Gally, and I hung around and went to dinner and enjoyed a couple of panels and the parties thrown by Kevin and Andy and Merv and Judith and so on. It was an awesome time.

But a bit crowded.

