



Journey Planet 18

# *Journey Planet 18 - December 2013*

*Editors? James Bacon, Chris Garcia, & Helen Montgomery!*

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# *Editorial*

Welcome to this issue, which neatly brings the year to a close.

We've been busy the last quarter of 2013 with three issues coming out in short order, and I expect some of you will only receive this in the post in 2014. We are folk of humble means, we do what we can.

As ever our thanks to the anonymous contributors. You know who you are and we welcome your words. I am grateful for your time. Again Helen Montgomery has again been a delightful guest editor. It's not good that we live in a time where people are frightened to write how they feel. That feels wrong. Is that censorship in a way, or bullying?

Journey Planet is a place where people can voice their thoughts, and again on matters which are sensitive, we feel we will help ensure we hear those voices that otherwise would be silent.

## Social Media.

It is individuals. People. Persons. Names. It doesn't feel like it, but there is no one block of people, there are only individuals, who decide to comment or write and they are responsible for their own words, even if they chase after today's cause and forget yesterday's, they are responsible for their own actions.

I especially want people who make false assertions in our community to stop. Individuals seem to feel they can speak for us all, state something like it is a fact, when it is their opinion.

So 2014 beckons. Holy cow.

With Loncon 3 and Shamrokon and a Dublin in 2019 launch on the calendar this is going to be a busy but fabulous year. Loncon 3 looks like it 'could' exceed 7,000 members - pretty amazing.

For JP we have the following plans.

Dr Who issue. I've been fiddling with a piece entitled 'Nightmare in Tardis Blue' and now it looks like after an interesting Whovian year, that there may be an issue all on Dr. Who. We'll keep you informed.

World War I. 2014 is the centenary of the start of the First World War and we have already spoken with Edward James, who is curating an exhibit at Loncon 3 on the connection between the fantastic fiction and World War I. We also want to explore this, look at other angles and also give an opportunity to fans to also explore their connections, and especially talk about artefacts that link back to that terrible time.

We have other plans, and we hope you join us for them, but hope you like this issue, and feel free to email us, your thoughts, how you feel

James

## *So, why an issue about social media and fandom?*

First, a quick note about “fandom”. For my purposes when thinking about this issue, I was primarily thinking about “traditional”, WSFS/Worldcon/Literary science fiction/fantasy conventions. I fully acknowledge that there are many fandoms out in the world, and they no doubt have similar experiences, but I was focusing on this one particular fandom.

Over the past few years, these “traditional” science fiction and fantasy conventions have had an increased presence on the web. Websites, Facebook pages or groups, Twitter – these are now all de rigueur for a convention. Unfortunately, the ability to use these tools effectively does not appear to have increased at the same rate.

Websites, which have been around longest, are often still poorly designed and missing information. Websites, however, rarely seem to create fire on the interwebs.

Facebook, Twitter, and Blogs, on the other hand... matches to tinder. But is this a bad thing or a good thing? Fire, after all, is an important tool – it helps cook our food, keeps us warm, and provides a source of light. This tool can also turn into a weapon – from small burns on our tongues to wildfires raging out of control in the forests.

What I began to wonder is which type of fire is social media setting in fandom? Warm, cozy fires to read by and roast marshmallows over? Or firestorms that will leave ashes and destruction in their wake?

Approaching this in my con-running hat (as opposed to my book-loving geek girl hat), I have read many articles and posts, and had many conversations with other con-runners about these questions. Unsurprisingly, opinions vary. In fact, often the opinions of \*one person\* can vary wildly!

I’ve heard comments about how social media has brought the community closer – and how it’s tearing the community apart.

I’ve heard how it has helped showcase diversity in fandom – and how it’s showing that there isn’t enough diversity.

It makes the Hugo Awards more accessible to voters – it turns the Hugo Awards into a popularity contest.

It allows for real time communication – it makes it too easy to speak before thinking.

It encourages open dialogue – it creates trolls.

It’s provided opportunities for fans to meet up in between conventions – it’s keeping people away from conventions because now they have other ways to get their geek on.

It provides a forum for concerns to be brought to light – it provides a forum to bully and persecute anyone who disagrees with the opinions espoused.

Personally, I am torn. I have seen the benefits, and I've seen the pain. There are times where I think "wow, it's great this is being discussed", and then I watch it take a left turn, and am reminded that "the road to hell is paved with good intentions". I have no solutions on how to keep it from taking that left turn. On the other hand, I wonder if sometimes the left turn is a good thing – will a phoenix somehow rise from the ashes of the firestorm?

Short version is that I argue a lot with both Me and Myself.

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*“Face-book has all the social graces of a nose-picking, hyperactive six-year-old, standing at the threshold of your attention and chanting, “I know something, I know something, I know something, won’t tell you what it is!”*”

*- Cory Doctorow, Content: Selected Essays on Technology, Creativity, Copyright, and the Future of the Future*

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### *The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly*

In conversations between me, James, and Chris, an idea germinated. Write an issue of Journey Planet about social media and fandom. Find as many people – conrunners, fans, artists, authors – as possible to write about their experiences with social media within fandom.

In our invitation asking for contributions, we wrote the following:

*With the explosion of social media sites, science fiction fandom has changed. Some of these changes have been positive. Others have been negative. Some are still to be determined. The use of social media within fandom continues to evolve. We would like to explore how social media has already had an impact, and where we see it going from here.*

*We’ve seen sites that heavily moderate comments to try and prevent trolls. We’ve seen sites that don’t moderate at all, and the results are quite mixed. We’ve seen sites that have turned off commenting altogether, and others that are requiring the use of Facebook in order to comment at all. We have seen Twitter kerfuffles. We have seen Twitter brilliance. We don’t imagine, however, that we have yet seen it all...*

We asked for contributions of both articles and artwork. We stated that it's a topic being widely discussed over a variety of venues, and we wanted to try and collate as many opinions as possible in one place.

## *The Experiment*

In my conversations with people about this topic, I was struck by two themes that kept arising.

First, the “cult of personality” – that people with a lot of fans (authors, artists, actors, etc.) have a lot of power in social media. The idea is that readers or listeners will agree with the opinions of these popular people \*simply because they admire them\*, or because they have agreed with so many of their opinions in the past, or because they just assume these people must have done their homework and present accurate information.

Second, the amount of fear – that expressing an opinion that is not currently popular, perhaps disagreeing with one of the Cult of Personality, will lead to blowback - being bullied and threatened both online and in person. More than once did I hear phrases about “villagers and pitchforks”, and an unwillingness to speak up for fear of being subjected to the pokes of the pitchforks.

How then, could we structure this issue to avoid those two potential problems?



## *Anonymity.*

We asked everyone if they would be willing to have their articles be anonymous.

Artists could choose whether or not they wished the artwork to be published with their name. We wondered if this would keep people from contributing – after all, the primary currency of fanzines is egoboo.

People could then express their opinions without fear of reprisal, and people would have to judge the content, without the influence of knowing who wrote it.

Was the experiment successful? It's hard to say. We had several people turn us down because they simply didn't have the time, although most of them also expressed regret because they thought it was a great topic. No one turned us down because they wouldn't be credited for the article.

We certainly didn't get as many articles as I had originally hoped. I think there were a few reasons for this. First, the initial turnaround time for articles was quite short. I then developed the upper respiratory cold from hell, and wasn't able to send out reminders to people. We then extended the deadline to closer to Thanksgiving, and once I again, I got sick and wasn't able to send out reminders to people. (My takeaway? Be the editor, but don't be the one responsible for sending out reminders for articles for Journey Planet, because it makes me get sick!) Perhaps if we had an longer time in the first place, and perhaps if I had been able to send reminders as originally planned, we would have gotten more contributions.

That being said, what we did get is, I think, engaging, well-written, and thought provoking. I hope you think so as well, and look forward to any Letters of Comments you wish to send.

Please, though, leave the pitchforks at home.

Sincerely,

Helen Montgomery, Guest Editor

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*“She made a mistake, she said a dumb thing – but who are we, Internet, to decide she had to die for this social media sin?”*

*– Jessica Galliard, “Social media fail runs both ways”,  
Redeye newspaper, December 27, 2013.*

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# *Old Fan's War: Why Social Media isn't the Game Changer you think it is*

On November 5, 2013, Lynne and Michael Thomas wrote an article in Apex magazine called "The SF/F Community: An Essay." Although not specifically about the relationship between social media and fandom, the article's first paragraph neatly summed up the attitudes of many fans towards the worst impulses of the Facebook Era, "There are days for us that the current fandom kerfuffle makes one want to, as in the words of Seanan McGuire, "ignite the biosphere." It's very easy to get frustrated and angry at the problems that crop up and want to retire from it all, almost always for very good reasons."

There is no question that technology radically changed fandom discourse from the mid-1990s on, when internet usage leapt from universities and military installations to invade home computers. The effects on fandom were almost instantaneous. A thousand Star Trek fans sites arose almost overnight, captured the attention of Paramount Pictures executives, and just as suddenly resulted in a thousand "cease and desist" letters. Consumer electronics continued to become more powerful and less expensive. In time, fanzines were capable of looking every bit as slick as the prozines. Then fanzines transformed into predominantly electronic publications capable of instantaneous global distribution. In a little more than a decade, they traveled far enough, fast enough to acquire a sense of their own nostalgia and return to a hybrid form of printed and electronically distributed formats.

More than anything, the rapid rise of personal computing and communications technologies and the way they allow people to express themselves and network with others created a lens for fandom to look at itself and wonder, "What has become of us?" Sometimes the scrutiny has been a good thing. News of persistent sexual harassment at conventions, delivered through a wide range of social media channels, has spurred a growing wave of con coms adopting formalized codes of conduct and anti-harassment policies, changing fandom culture for the better. In many ways, technology's ability to instantaneously capture and broadcast evidence of bad behavior is creating a safer fan community.

The scrutiny is not all good, however. Instant transmission of incomplete or superficial evidence is shaping a sometimes dangerously punitive fandom culture, willing to rush to judgment rather than carefully weigh facts. This impulse is particularly concerning when fans and professionals cry out for instant justice over issues like sexual harassment, where the combination of gender politics ideology and a long-standing history of unchecked bad behavior raise both the stakes and the outrage. Justice is rarely the child of wrath.

Sadly, social media is also proving a fertile avenue for some of the same abuses it sometimes helps to prevent. In May of 2013 A-Kon 24 suffered a particularly nasty trolling of female fans by way of Twitter. According to the Dallas Observer, a group calling themselves the Grope Crew, "...threatened female convention-goers with sexual assault using the #gropecrew hashtag, making a lot of people extremely uncomfortable."

These, of course, are hot-button issues. In many ways, it is the day-to-day use of social media that proves most vexing to fans and fandom alike. With every tweet promoting an IO9 post of questionable value, with every Tumbler image that puts unauthorized or inappropriate images of cosplayers on the web for the world to see, with every flame war in the comments sections of Facebook groups, more and more people are asking, "What has become of fandom? Is social media bringing us together or tearing us apart?"

"How is social media affecting fandom?" is the wrong question to ask. It presupposes that there is a universal concept of "fandom" that applies across a broad continuum of fans in a way that can reveal some deeper truth. Nothing could be further from reality. The real questions are "What exactly is fandom, and how is it trying to reconcile its existence with the present? Is social media a "new" phenomenon disrupting the old order or an old impulse finding new expression?"

### *Terms of Engagement*

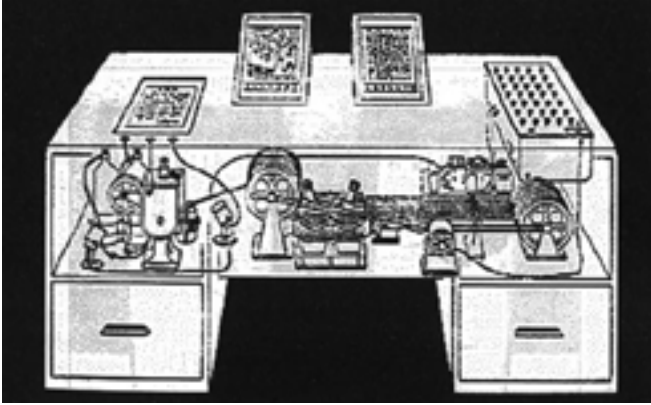
At its center, fandom is a set of behaviors exhibited by any group of people who are interested enough in a person, idea, or object to commit their time, energy and resources to expressing their enthusiasm. Wherever you find fans, you find fandom; whether they are quilting fans, fans of cats, fans of mystery books, or what have you. The means of expressing enthusiasm for each individual interest may vary, but the desire to spend time and resources to enjoy and promote various interests is universal.

Where science fiction fandom confuses the issue is in those circles where "Fandom" is invoked with a capital "F." "Fandom" typically refers to a specific sub-group of science fiction and fantasy fans associated with "literary" science fiction and fantasy subjects. Fandom enthusiasm is expressed through fan-run activities like publishing fanzines, organizing local science fiction conventions, Worldcon, and the Hugo Awards.

In reality, "Fandom" is part of a more generalized diaspora of sub-groups that populate "fandom" with a lower-case "f." These "fans" tend to congregate in more generalized social networks rather than organize as members of specific groups or clubs. Where "Fans" tend to lift up and celebrate the work of their fellow fans as much as the work of professionals, "fans" tend to find less credence in activities and works created by people lacking professional credentials, preferring for-profit media cons over the fan-run variety.

The duration of this essay will use “Fandom” with a capital “F” when referring to organized fandom of the World Science Fiction Society stripe and “fandom” with a lower case “f” when referring to the more generalized collection of science fiction and fantasy enthusiasts who self-identify as “fans” without any particular allegiance to organized “Fandom.”

Which begs the next question, what in the hell is “social media?” Merriam-Webster.com invokes “forms of electronic communication” as an essential component defining social media. The distinction is both limiting and unnecessary. For purposes of this article, we will define “social media” as follows:



Social media: all forms of communication through which users create communities for the purposes of sharing information, ideas, personal messages, and other content.”

In this sense, “social media” is a force in organized Fandom reaching all the way back to the letters section of Hugo Gernsback’s *Amazing Stories* magazine starting in 1926, where readers wrote in with their comments and addresses, the addresses were printed and seen by fellow fans, and fans were then able to connect outside the pages of the magazine. In actual fact, “social media” is conceptually hard-wired into our neurology. It is human nature to create avenues of communication, share thoughts, and forge relationships. Clearly people have created community-driven communications forums in both fandom and Fandom for a very long time, but it is equally clear that, recently, something has changed. What exactly?

### *The Insanity of Immediacy*

There are two ways that the Facebook Era has meaningfully altered the fortunes of fandom. First, social media is instantaneous, ubiquitous, and persistent. Once people could consider their thoughts, write them down, and then think twice before committing them to posterity by sending a letter. Conversa-

tions relied on proximity to another human or proximity to a land-line telephone, both communications scenarios which added nuance in the form of non-verbal cues to deepen channels of information.

Now phones are always with us, always on. When we aren't busy using them to consult Google or check up on our email and Facebook profiles, we are using them to capture and post everything in our line of sight for posterity on the web. All of the world is no longer a stage but rather a packed house of information directed by the groundlings. Often these communications channels are mediated by screens as text-only events in the forms of texts, tweets, and status updates, eliminating the added information of non-verbal expression. The result is discourse that tends to be less considered and functional than only a decade ago.

Second, the current speed and reach of social media is such that the net has opened up the entire continuum of fandom all at once for all who would sample it, with infinite outlets to choose from. In some ways, this has been a blessing. The ranks of Fandom, while well organized and enthusiastic, used to lack the scale to connect with everyone potentially interested in, but still unaware of Worldcon and the local convention scene. Now, middle-aged fans naturally attracted to the fandom culture of their youth have the opportunity to find their way back to Fandom on the web with a Google search or two and a couple of "likes" on Facebook.

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*On his apathy for social media: "I really try not to pay attention. Put it this way: I want to keep my finger on the pulse of what's going on. I don't want to be ignorant in that sense. But I would never be able to make music if I got caught up in that. I'd probably get in some ugly arguments with people. ... It would consume a lot of my time and be very counterproductive to do that."*

*- Eminem (interview on Shade 45 SiriusXM radio, November 4 2013)*

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It is equally true that the near-infinite bandwidth and signal flow of the internet and social media are as overwhelming and divisive as they are galvanizing. Most members of fandom under the age of 30 are attracted to thousands of tiny islands in the net that are totally heedless of Fandom's interest in the next big thing at the Hugos. Fandom is slowly receding into the backwaters beyond the crowded shipping lanes filled with more varied and exciting SFF ports of call like major media outlets, ginormous media con showrooms, and a cacophony of blogs, micro blogs, podcasts, YouTube channels, and websites for every evolution of fannish goodness lurking in servers the world over.

## *Old Fan's War*

It is this capacity to make everything instantly available and nearly eternal on the web that is giving old guard Fandom reason to pause in recent days and ask, "What in the hell are we becoming?" In effect, social media has inadvertently revealed an Old Fan's War brewing in the ranks of science fiction fandom since the 1970s, when Star Wars first made SFF fandom more universally accepted. That conflict has rapidly escalated since the 1990s as fandom has steadily risen to eclipse Fandom as the primary force guiding trends in science fiction and fantasy media over the last three decades.

WSFS Fandom still sometimes harbors the perception that it should be the primary organizational interest representing the broader community of all science fiction fans. The perception is, at best, difficult to justify. According to data collected from Wikipedia.com, average Worldcon attendance during the 1960s was 838.5 members per convention. That number tripled to 2538.8 in the 1970s and doubled again in the 1980s to 5223.8, including the largest reported attendance at any Worldcon with the 1984 L.A. Con II that saw 8,365 fans descend on the Anaheim Convention Center in Anaheim, CA.

But by the 1990s average attendance at Worldcon dipped slightly to 4884 attendees, a pattern that persisted through the 2000s with an average of 4615.9 attending members. The trend continues downward this decade with an average of only 3816.75 attendees from 2010 through 2013.

By contrast, attendance data collected from the Dragon\*Con website about their for-profit convention held in Atlanta, GA since 1987 reveals a con that has grown steadily from an average of 2,100 members in the 1980s to 9,710 members in the 1990s, with conservative estimates putting average attendance in the 2000s at 19,600 per convention. The average for the first four years of the 2010s alone has been 48,750 per convention, with 2013 being the peak year at 57,000 attendees.

The data isn't perfect. Numbers for both Worldcon and Dragon\*Con attendance are dodgy in places. But one thing is clear: even if the numbers are off, the trends are not. Assuming that percentage reporting errors for both events more or less cancel one another out, it is clear that Fandom, as represented by Worldcon, does not have nearly the same pull with general fan interest as the more "fandom" friendly Dragon\*Con.

A lot has been said about "the graying of fandom" over the last several years. As Warren Buff noted in his Winter 2008-2009 article in *Challenger*, "... Fandom is not getting older, it's just not happening in all of the same places that it did twenty years ago. We're out there, forming clubs, running cons, and having a fannish good time. Take a look."

For the most part, Buff hits the nail on the head. There are people still out there running conventions, and not all of them are old enough to be staring down the barrel of an AARP card in their immediate future. He also identifies waves of pop culture science fiction fans—“Barbarian hordes” as he calls them with tongue firmly planted in cheek—that have made their way into Fandom through Dungeons & Dragons, comic books, and Star Wars among other waves of popular fandom.

But Fandom, that institutional fannish endeavor with deep roots in the Depression Era, led by SMOFs running Worldcons and handing out Hugos, is absolutely a graying segment of the broader fandom continuum. And that is to be expected. Institutions, caught up as they are in core values, traditions, and constitutional mandates that define the governance of those institutions, are conservative by nature. Part of the WSFS mandate is to conserve its core values, traditions, and principals of governance.

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*“Most neuroses and some psychoses can be traced to the unnecessary and unhealthy habit of daily wallowing in the troubles and sins of five billion strangers.”*  
*Robert A. Heinlein, Stranger in a Strange Land*

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In a very real sense, those core values are at odds with the “Barbarian hordes” of fandom. Where Fandom was predominantly concerned with the literary traditions of science fiction and fantasy, technological and cultural innovations began to trend electronic. By the mid 1990’s a new generation of fan was flocking to the internet engaged less by traditional print media and more taken with electronic and screen-based story telling in a wide variety of forms, like computer games, transmedia narratives, and an even greater focus on film and television. At the same time, the devaluation of intellectual property encouraged by the internet, where essentially everything could be made available for free and nothing could be properly regulated, began to eat away at the once viable livelihoods of writers who used to live off of a world that actually wanted to pay for writing in all of its many and wondrous forms.

Clearly, these new fans do not operate on the traditional Fandom cultural bandwidth. The old guard is happy to acquire the new tools offered by slick and affordable desktop publishing tools, ISPs, listserv groups, and the ability to create and post a webpage on GeoCities. But Fandom is still attached to its books, cons, and fanzines in a way that new fans increasingly are not.

And the gray-hairs are cranky. For every member of Fandom wondering how to keep Worldcon relevant for succeeding generations, there’s someone saying, “I’d rather the WSFS died than change what it stands for by pandering to new members.” For every convention-goer saying, “Why aren’t there more people under the age of thirty attending this con?” there’s another saying, “I’m so glad we don’t have to deal with a bunch of teenagers trying to crash the hotel parties.”

## *Finding an Accord*

If there is a reconciliation to be had between Fandom and fandom, it is in coming to terms with the idea that part of the reason why Fandom is “graying” is because it best serves fans who are approaching middle-age and older, that fans naturally attracted to leviathan media cons and net-bound information overload in their twenties and early thirties will eventually begin to seek out the less crowded and more congenial offerings of Fandom as they march towards their forties. The real Old Fan’s War is not a battle against the unwashed masses of fandom’s “Barbarian hordes” but a battle between the desire to honor Fandom’s past and the wish to see a new generation advance those traditions in the future.

The situation is delicate. Fandom must refuse to be distracted by its own hallowed institutions and carefully consider who exactly they are trying to serve and how. If the Hugos are serving Fandom without representing the broader tide of fandom, their value as an authentic “voice of the fans” becomes questionable. The adoption of inexpensive voting rights for the Hugo awards as a way to encourage broader fandom participation has been suggested as a possible remedy. This year’s “No Representation without Taxation” amendment to the WSFS constitution crafted in defiance of a Voting Membership option underlines the depth of the divide.

Fandom must also adjust to the broad cultural shift away from physical books and text-based narratives and better address contributions to science fiction and fantasy made by recent and emerging media formats. Ways must be found to better access, filter, and celebrate the internet’s broadening field of electronically published independent writers and artists, be they bloggers, video game designers, transmedia artists, or entrepreneurial authors giving Smashwords a go on their own terms. These are all trends that will define the graying fans of tomorrow, and they are certain to only be the first of many more changes to come.

G.K. Chesterton once wrote, “Tradition means giving votes to the most obscure of all classes, our ancestors. It is the democracy of the dead.” In a field that celebrates the future, Fandom needs to lay down its arms, grit its teeth, and open its arms wide to the latest social media kerfuffle, not lay down amongst the dead to dream the dreams of nevermore.

## *Designating a war fought between allies.*

Social Media is a catch all term for lots of things, be it Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr and so on, I have to admit, like the demographic I represent (not a teenager), I do Facebook, but have avoided Twitter and the rest, as I want to read, run conventions and enjoy myself, and further time spent on social media pursuits, is just not for me.

As it is, I seem to have a Facebook friendly switch on. My good friend Emma King just cut about 400 off her 'friends' list, having decided that the fight against misogyny, which she seemed to think was going well, having made a few, a sparse few think about how they could be wrong, was overall just burning up her time. Precious time. I spin through, like things my pals are doing, message people who I do not have email for and post up nice photos, mostly narcissistic.

That is to be expected. Of me anyhow. I sent my family and friends a Christmas Card featuring me and Santa in Paddington next to my train, so narcissistic.

You see, for me an element of Social Media is when individuals decide it is the vehicle for social justice. Now I assume that means righting wrongs, and could be, since I am fairly liberal, the fight against discrimination of all kinds. So that is cool, I suppose.

Except when it goes wrong.

People, individuals make assertions. They can be lacking in all fact. Do you know anyone who has said something on Twitter, only to be wrong? Was it too late, once others feel offended by the situation and start to complain also?

Now, for sure, complaining on social media can make things happen, you should see the money Virgin Trains spent on trying to speed up the service recovery after fatalities on the railway, due to the immediate nature of the complaints when trains come to a halt.

Yeah. Think about that for a moment. Interesting priorities.

I prefer prevention rather than quick clean up.

So the internet can be an effective tool to communicate an issue, and of course if others agree with you, then you can exert pressure on a given person or organisation. This can be a good thing. Look at various northern African countries, who seem to have regime changes, and attribute much of that to social media. It can be good.

Sure it can be good.

I do wonder though, back in our own parish, if we seem to have totally forgotten that conventions, are run by hobbyists. Not paid politicians, state employees, or employees of a profit or non profit company that pays them, just plain old hobbyists. The pressure that can seem to be put on these hobbyists



seems disproportionate, especially when the justice at hand, isn't that justified or is misdirected.

We are at risk of damaging those who are not doing anything actually wrong, collateral damage perhaps, when a wrong is done. I am tired of generalisations, whether it be 'bloggers', 'Fanzine people', 'Worldcon members', 'Business meeting attendees', we are all individuals, and we allow assertions to be made against a group, with no issue. Sometimes it suits us, or our argument, but I want to see people directly quoted, I want to see individuals named.

That we need to look after one another, to ensure there is no harm is important, yet for conventions, involvement and volunteers are a limited life-blood, and the activity of volunteers is more important than people feeling better by thinking they have exercised some great victory through social media. Pyrrhic.

Social media is a fannish activity. Many people engage with it, and enjoy it, and I must admit I find great links to very interesting things, works to read, reviews and so on, and am grateful for that. There is nothing at all wrong with it, and just as blogs are valid fanwriting, I see that maintaining various other types of social media are very worthwhile.

I was gutted recently, I asked the head of programme for a large regional US convention if there could be a panel on Comics women are reading and he was keen, but upon inspection, none of the women who had volunteered had indicated comics as an area they could or would speak. That makes no sense to me. *Saga* won the Hugo last year, and I know many of my friends are reading it, boys and girls, and they are fans.

For all the social media furore, how can this still be a problem. Is it because social media doesn't always address the problem?

There is a fear of course, about social media. An author spoke to me, they did not want to be named, but they reported some strange online behaviour, bullying, in the name of fighting racism. Anyhow it ended as one of the parties realised that life was too short to waste on inconsequential things.

Racism, involves discrimination against a race and I think where that happens we need to point it out clearly, and say 'STOP'. This is not the same as being offended by something, and I think that we get confused, or decide we are confused about this.

Discrimination is wrong, and if it were to occur at a convention, then it needs to stop.

Yet the comic panel issue is an interesting quandary, for sure, the convention has in no way discriminated against women, and from what I have seen it is extremely welcoming and encourages diversity. That sort of positive approach is something that I like, but for some reason, it hasn't worked here.

It is empathy that is really lost, there is just no time for empathy, to walk in another person's shoes first, or consider it, before judging them.

For me activism means doing a little more than mentioning it on social media. Signing a petition is the least I can do, but I also write to MP's and give money to an organisation that fights against racism amongst other things.

Of course sometimes, one sees words, and they cause much furore, and everyone agrees that this is important and it may instil action. Paul Cornell's gender parity announcement got a lot of people thinking, talking, but also shouting and then there were tears.

Now, although Gender Parity is somewhat moderated, to well suit the pragmatic realities, there seems to be broad agreement that a more diverse pool of people are needed for programme participants at conventions.

I of course am a comic book fan, and know that women credited on comics make up a meagre 14% at DC and Marvel, and that is in a good month, it drifts down to 11%.

And that will always confound me. For Paul Cornell has worked for both companies, and I often wondered if a good start to ensuring we could have more women comic creators talk about comics, would be employing more.

Of course that might be focussing on prevention rather than quick fix up, with participants jumping off panels.

And arguing with one's employer, is something that I can understand, for when it comes to discrimination, it is important not to just tweet about it, but to actually take action.

To petition. To parlay. To seek resolution.

To Strike.

To stand on a picket. To risk being passed over.

To lose ones wages. These things I have done.

For sure, I am lucky that I have a strong union, but it needs to be strong, companies have no real interest in people, unless they have to, they want profits, which is not a problem, but must be tempered.

Yet, I think the type of action people need to take, needs to be more focused on the problem, on the individual who is at issue, on the root cause.

There is nothing wrong with championing good women comic creators, I do it all the time, when I find work that I enjoy, there is nothing wrong with pointing out that there is a problem, in the work place, that is not belligerent or disloyal, in actual fact it might enhance the place.

So I often ponder about activism and how it comes about. I think some folk, well all they have is the internet and that must be a great empower-er. And that is good.

What is it to take action.

On the way up from Heathrow, I was looking out my train cab window,

back along the length of my train at West Ealing, one of the nicest suburban stations on my route, the other is Hanwell, which is modelled as it was in Victorian Times, but I like these stations for more personal reasons.

So near the end of the train, a fellow is running back towards the doors, and well throwing his arm, messing I think, but with the cameras, which show me a more details view in the CCTV screens angled at my cab, it is apparent that this is not messing, he is throwing punches and kicks now into the doorway, and the door won't close despite my pressing the button.

I get out and walk promptly towards him and as I go, I bellow down the platform to him, 'get away from the train' he hears it, looks mean and angry, he has a lean and aggressive look about him, and now I wonder where the hell is

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*Concerned consumers are realizing that they can use social media to organize themselves around shared values to start effective movements. Social media gives them a sounding board to share ideas, as well as a means to punish irresponsible corporate behaviors.*

*Simon Mainwaring*

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the Customer service assistant, or on board ticket checker. Jesus was he at the end of those punches and kicks?

I walk down towards this fellow, and he shouts abuse and threats, and I put my hands up palms forward in a passive motion, I don't actually want a fight, I want to see where my colleague is.

He is all angry and making like he is coming for me close now, mere feet away, I must steel myself, I do not turn my back, I prepare.

Then my colleague appears, in the doorway, obviously very shaken and upset, BUT he is up and standing and I cannot see any injuries, and he is shouting and jumping off the train as he comes to assist me.

The protagonist of this incredible situation, is wrong footed, he goes back at my colleague, and then I start to shout, and he turns to run at me, but his demeanor has changed, he has gone from Fight to flight and he runs past me as I step aside, and he away on his toes and sprints for the exit.

My colleague actually goes to pursue, but I pop my arm around his shoulder, and gently grip him, and tell him to let him go.

The red mist has risen there, we are after all humans who feel threatened and the natural stance, well when there I two against one, is to fight, but he immediately eases, although I do not remove my arm.

We walk to my cab, he is now not only calm, but upset and of course, grateful. I am thankful he is OK and he showed up when he did, and I am concerned for him and agree that the fellow was crazy obviously. I get my colleague into my cab, and call the signaller.

It felt like seconds, but we are askew now by about 6 minutes.

I explain to the signaller, and then to the station staff member who joins us from upstairs in the office, as we have been stationary a while, what has occurred.

My colleague is still upset, one can feel it, I too recognise the quickened pace in my heart, the adrenalin that obviously was coursing through my veins, my confidence unfettered by this incident, luckily.

I take my time, slowly readying the train, and then people appear, so I let them on, this is good it all calms me, as do soothing words to my colleague, recognising that in relaxing him, I am relaxing myself.

We continue on, to Ealing Broadway and Paddington. I won't let him out of the cab, he has had too much, no more for a bit.

The customer had no ticket, and although initially said he would look for it, then basically said he would punch my colleague and was extremely threatening making aggressive attacking moves.

Luckily all the punches and kicks were either faux, or avoided although they looked very aggressive and meaningful, and no doubt from my colleagues perspective totally threatening.

But we are OK. We don't get much of this shit really.

But I am lucky, I could stay in my cab. I may get told I should have, although I may not, as really my concern was my colleague.

Some days people can be very horrible, abusive,

But I feel lucky, and not in a 'phew' sort of way, in a 'well my job is not all bad' and 'I work with good people'.

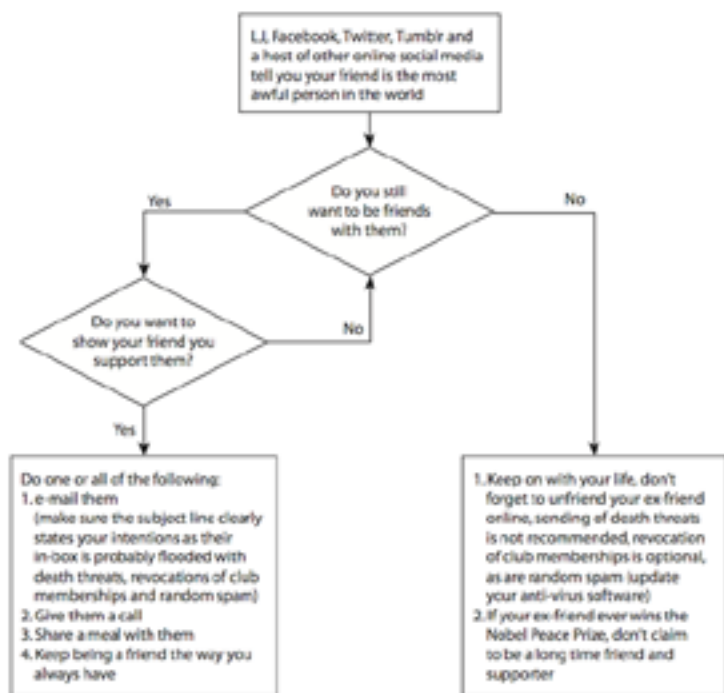
Most of the day I was concentrating on Dublin and London anyhow, and having a tremendous debate about a payment structure and methods of doing things at a convention, which reminds me that again, life is hard... not really.

How could you tweet that?

How could some social media help my colleague, help me? I would be told not to get out of my cab not to endanger myself.

Really. Sometimes we need to say and do things, which are a little dangerous, not for any other reason except we need to.

## What to do when you are told your friend is the most awful person in the world



*“These days, social media waits for no one. If you’re LATE for the party, you’ll probably be covered by all the noise and you might not be able to get your voice across. It could only mean that if you want to be heard by the crowd, you have to be fast; and on social media, that means you have to be REALLY fast.”*

*Aaron Lee (@askaaronlee)*

# *On Social Media & Fandom*

Depending on who you ask, social media is either the best thing to happen or the worst. I tend to lean towards “better,” with a pinch of the bad, but feel free to take this with a grain of salt as you don’t know who I am.

It has never been easier for fans to connect and communicate with each other, ironically in ways so similar to some of the classic writings we bond over. Now, thanks to social media, conventions can reach these fans, too. The great conversations that we have in the Consuite can continue and conventions we hadn’t heard about because we were too busy talking to pick up fliers can now catch our attention when flowing through our news feed. At con news can spread faster than ever thanks to Twitter. More fans will get to hear the GRRM reading because the con heard about the line and moved it to a bigger space. Members can each from others that a child is missing and that means more eyes for the search.

However, with all the good that is being done, there is also a scoop of the bad. Situations that require time and thorough investigation can be rushed due to what can feel like the entire universe screaming online, especially when bigger names like John Scalzi and N.K. Jemisin pick up the scent. Embarrassing problems that could be learned of in private are now things of the past and become issues that can drive away fans permanently. Committees who work tirelessly to create an event can be bullied because angry fans can’t see that a not-fantastic decision was the least bad option.

Whether bad or good, what I think social media means for fandom is communication and education. Conventions can more easily learn what works by communicating with their members. Feedback sessions no longer happen solely on the last day of the con, they happen all year long. Learning points can come from other conventions, as social issues are publicly discussed and archived forever. Conventions can educate members about things going on at their main event, and most importantly, members can educate convention about what they want, needs, and expect.



# *Social Media – Problems within Problems*

There is a question I've been mulling over. It's not an easy one, in fact it's damn difficult. The question is simple: can Social Networks be used for good?

Now, I know that Social Networks are merely tools, and it's not the tool but the user who determines whether the effect is good or evil, but when you see something like Twitter or Facebook, you see events move across platforms like waves, taking people up with them in various directions. Waves, that what Social Media makes possible.

Let us take a few specific events, shall we?

## *The Readercon Incident*

You've heard about it, no? There was an incident of harassment at Readercon in 2012. Someone was inappropriate, steps were taken by the ConComm, then more steps, and a popular con-runner was banned from the convention for life.

It's not so much the events, but the reactions to the event that tell an interesting tale. The first wave crashed not long after a post largely concerned with another matter broke. *This is terrible!* followed by the gnashing of teeth and the calls for pitchforks and the forming of a posse. This led to other posts. *I know him, there must be some sort of mistake* and then back and forth. *The con's not done enough! Banning is wrong! Safe places! Ridiculous policies! Bad ConComm! Good ConComm! Everything's right in the end! Everything's wrong in the end! Yes! No! Grrr! Grrr!*

I watched all of this, read along on a half-dozen Facebook pages, a few Twitter feeds, a few blogs, and ghd help me, even on LiveJournal. I guess I should explain for readers under 30: LiveJournal used to be where Fandom happened on-line. There was an endless line of discussion, and anger, both ways, and in the end decisions were made. The problem is, of course, there were those who disagreed with it, and there were those who thought it was unfair, and other who said that it was not enough. This has happened many times across the history of fandom, with varying results, but this was one of the most significant moments because it played out across the Internet, with some of the most significant names in SMoFdom as players. In the old days, this sort of thing might have played out in the pages of fanzine, in discussions at club meetings, in ConSuite conversations. It would have played out over weeks, months, or in cases of Big Deals, years. Social Networking, where so much is so visible to so many so quickly, brought this to light quickly and with passion. And though it allowed for dealign with an issue quickly, I'd argue that the most



important conversations took place AFTER the incident. Once the dealing with the events had been done, and a bit of the heat had been transferred to any number of other matters, did a real conversation start, and policies made: some of which might have gone too far in one direction or another, and some of which are just destined for complete insignificance. The thing is, the right time to discuss that stuff isn't when you're dealing with an issue. Ideally, it's BEFORE you deal with an issue, but if one comes out of left field, then when some time has passed.

### *Thing 2 - Jim C. Hines*

Basically, Jim posted a thing about a photo of former WorldCon Chairs and on gender blindness and colorblindness. Basically, he said that most of the folks were White and most were men (and looking at the photo, most were white men). First off, he wasn't wrong; that was in fact the case. It set off a storm of commentary, both agreeing with what he said and arguing various points of what they saw as criticism. Of course, my take was different. He was saying one thing and people heard another. I disagree with him on a couple of levels. First off, colorblindness is the single most important concept in my eyes. I've grown up considering myself Chicano, and the rest of the world does not see it that way. Why? Because of my skin color, because I grew-up in the suburbs, because my Mom is Anglo, because I don't look like a Mexican. It's OK, I get it, that's all a part of the package, if you wouldn't look out of place shopping at Abercromby-and-Fitch, you're white. I get that, but to me, that's the ultimate in racial profiling.

In a non-colorblind world, by even mentioning the lack of diversity in that photo, you're making an accusation. I know, I know, you totally don't see it like that, but I do, because what you're saying is what's important is what someone looks like. I disagree, strenuously, but I didn't wade into that fight. Why? Because then I'm a bigot. Why? Because I'm a white guy defending the whiteness of that photo. Weird, huh?

The fact is it doesn't matter what color or race or gender or whatever the people in that photo are. I get the concept that it makes fandom look like a private Connecticut country club, but scratch even a little below the surface and you'll find huge levels of diversity in that photo. The problem is, few folks want to make that effort.

This blew up right before WorldCon, and among the SMoFs it was a big deal at the con. Discussion, anger, bitterness, arguments, they all took place. I was a part of a heated argument on the subject where I actually defended what Jim was saying, while also not agreeing with him. It was an odd bit of mental gymnastics, but the other approach was "he's calling fandom the KKK!" and Jim was doing nothing of the sort.

But all of this blew-up through Social Media. The original post was shared, and those shares were shared, and commented on, and the comments were commented on, and on and on. A wave was formed, it crashed and washed some people out, and that led to another crash, littering bodies across the beaches. Would this have happened 20 years ago? Yes, even 30 years ago, but it would have played out slower, and possibly meaner and with more personal bitterness.

### *The Olde Days*

So, there were battles in fandom dating back to the 1930s. In the 1960s and again in the 1980s, there were battles that lasted years. The Breendoggle and TAFF Wars (also called Topic A, among other things) left scars that lasted decades, and played out in zines and at conventions. These were heated battles and nothing has really approached the level of fire those to brawls generated. The closest was probably RaceFail, and that blew over much faster than either of these. The thing is, today, things flare up, consume the world, then fade away quickly, moving on to the next topic. Even things like the Moondoggle (the dropping of Elizabeth Moon fas GoH at Wiscon) led to a ton of talk and even a fair bit of anger, and it was done within a month or so. I couldn't imagine that sort of speedy resolution even as late as the 1990s. That sorta thing would have torn the Fannish World apart! As it happened, it led to some hard feelings, but nothing like the old days.

I think some of it has to do with the ease that Social Media affords to these events. In the old days, you had to put a lot of effort into making your comments on a situation. You had to stew a bit, let things fester in your mind, and then on your fingers while you typed it, copied it, mailed it. Battles raged out over months and years. Now, you can put a little bit of time in every day and get a lot of reaction, have it seen by a large number of people, and it burns so fast, but there's far less effort. Things don't have to stew anymore, you can get it all out, and fast. We haven't had an all-out Fannish Bloodbath in the Social Media Era, even including RaceFail. That was a limited skirmish compared to the fights of the past. Or you could look at it like this - Fandom is ALWAYS in a start of all-out war. There's always some issue that is being debated and fought over. In the old days, maybe that wasn't the case, or maybe it was just that everyone selected their audience, mailed their zines to folks they knew. There's always something today, and it can be rough on people. Some folks want to be involved in all of it, and others just want to be a part of the community but seeing all the drama, back away. I've been guilty of that latter situation often myself. There's the concept that we should all just get along, but then something rises up and it's a problem for everyone.

## *A Matter of Perspective*

Let's face it: Fandom is a left-leaning group. For all the conversation that fandom is a bunch of conservative old folk, and some of us are, those who hang out on Social Media, no matter what age, tend to be more liberal. This colors some of our conversations, and I think we don't like to think about it. Let's talk a very recent, broad example from popular culture. *Duck Dynasty*, one of the hottest shows on Cable (and one I've never even thought to watch), and one of the stars, Phil Robinson, made both racist and homophobic comments. There is always the possibility of these being publicity stunts, but probably not. He said these things and A&E suspended him. Now, that's a good thing in my eyes, because a company should be able to fire people for the stupid stuff they say, but what if it went the other way? What if he'd said "Well, Gay Marriage has to be legal!" and was suspended? I am certain that would lead to an absolute firestorm, and the truth is, they're both the exact same thing. That's where I get stuck.

So often in fandom, it's not necessarily the response, but that you're looking at a situation through one set of eyes and there are multiple ways of viewing it. It's tough for some of us, because we have opinions and experiences and too often, none of us are happy with a situation, often for very different reasons. How do you deal with that? You discuss it, which Social Media was basically designed for allowing, but too often it's during duress that we come to it.

## *So, Back to the Central Question*

Can Social Media be used for good?

Jay Lake raised money for the sequencing of his tumors via LJ, Facebook, Twitter, and so forth.

Huge numbers of people have come to fandom via blogs and Social Networks.

Relationships have been born, conventions have been started, incredibly kind words have been put to pixels all because there is a place for all of it to exist in the view of the Wide Wide World. Thousands of hilarious things have been posted, entirely new kinds of friendship have been created, all because of things like Twitter and Facebook. It's an amazing thing that has allowed expressions of all kinds to spring up; both good and bad.

Yes, Social Networking can be good, and though there's some bad, what it makes possible is wonderful. We'll probably never have a perfect Social Media World because we'll probably never have a Perfect World.

# Social Media - Cons and Pros

It has long been the tradition of bidding conventions such as Westercon and Worldcon to conceal the slate of guests of honor until after the bid is won, or if the bid did not win, to not reveal the slate. This best practice wisely focuses the voters on the bid itself: the experience of the committee, the site and so forth. Equally wisely, it prevents site selection from being a contest of slates. It would be grossly unfair and hurtful to the guests we are saying we want to honor by judging them lesser than some other slate of guests. Pro culture is often fractious enough without this sort of fuel and so we thought we laid the spectre of divisiveness to bed.

But it turns out that we had not banished that spectre completely. It bided its time and rose from the grave in a new form with the advent of social media.

As conventions sought to understand and use social media to promote our conventions, there was a slow start to the interactions between the fan and pro communities in this space. There were some pros that liked some con Facebook pages, the occasional tweet, nothing major.

In the race for the 2015 Worldcon site, all that changed. First appearing were pictures of various pros either at fan tables or posing with bid regalia. Then, suddenly, pros of all sorts were being videotaped for their endorsements and those endorsements plastered all over Facebook, convention websites, tweeted and re-tweeted. All three bids got into the act. To quote Wikipedia ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/73rd\\_World\\_Science\\_Fiction\\_Convention](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/73rd_World_Science_Fiction_Convention)), “Authors George R. R. Martin and Cory Doctorow publicly supported the Helsinki bid and encouraged their fans to vote while artist Phil Foglio declared his support for Spokane’s bid and artist Bob Eggleton declared his support for Orlando.”



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*“The overarching problem is that everyone sees and uses social media from a different perspective.”*  
*Neal Schaffer (@nealschaffer)*

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It is clear to see that even though these endorsers may or may not have been potential guests of honor for their respective bids, the competitive aspect is the same: stacking Martin and Doctorow against Eggleton against Foglio. I truly hope that the first three did not take the results of site selection as criticisms of them or their work.

So, that’s what’s happened so far. How does the future look?

People have seized on this idea, wrongly I believe, as a good practice. As an example of this, Dublin has already put a photo of author Michael Carroll holding their bid flyer on their Facebook page.

Continued unchecked, this trend will turn contested site selection races into races for pro endorsements; races to see who can line up the most celebrity star power. I think this would be very bad for our conventions for three reasons:

1) As this practice continues to escalate, it is likely not only to throw All Fandom Into War over the pros, but likely All Pros Into War as well, where votes for a particular site are interpreted as a vote against one or more pros.

2) It drives the focus of site selection away from the important things listed above, a process likely to evolve us toward gate shows: lots of big names and a poorly run con.

3) The celebrity endorsement should be rejected out of hand by any critical thinker. Currently, there is an ad starring comedian Will Farrell selling Dodge Durangos. But if one takes a step back from the comedy, you have to ask yourself, “What makes Will Farrell an expert on trucks? Why is his endorsement worth anything at all?”. Similarly, a pro’s view (and especially a big name pro’s view) of a con is likely to be very different than the average member’s experience. What makes Joe Pro an expert on what makes a good Worldcon, and especially, what makes a good Worldcon for our members?

This is a call to action. Now is the time to nip this in the bud while the trend is relatively new and doesn’t have the force of tradition. Let’s send that spectre back to grave where it belongs.

# *Managing the Twitterstorm - Do's and Don'ts of Social Media Triage*

Online storms are not special to conventions or fandom - they are an increasingly common part of the landscape for any event, organization or high profile individual. This short article suggests some simple do's and don'ts to help conrunners navigate these fast-moving rapids.

## *The World ... is Changed*

What fascinates me more than anything else about this topic is that we live in a time of phenomenal change for online social interactions, and this is creating the world's largest ever experiment in human behaviour and psychology. Facebook is nine years old; Twitter is seven years old; and of course in terms of material penetration you can take a couple of years off each of those numbers. And these technologies have created a new paradigm - the exponentially-expanding bubble where news and discussion rapidly expands from direct stakeholders to large numbers of people who have no connection with the original event. Moreover, it is often the case that the third- or fourth-hand news is taken as automatic truth because the ultimate recipient received it as a relay from someone they see as a reliable source. The result is often collective concern, or even outrage, propagating rapidly from in some cases a single report based on a very subjective view of a particular situation.

Of course we also see other, even less pleasant, scenarios taking advantage of the same technologies (e.g. cyber-bullying of both children and adults) and it seems to me that these things are all symptomatic of a situation where social and behavioural etiquettes have not caught up with the technology. I am fairly sure that at some point, these societal etiquettes will catch up (e.g. at some point people will start to realize that it's too easy to over-react, and learn to be more appreciative that social media are an unreliable narrator) - but until then, we need to find some practical solutions when the problem occurs in our backyard.

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*"Leaders used to be judged by how they responded in a crisis. Now they are judged by how well they anticipate one."*

*- @KhanfarW*

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## *The Challenge*

The challenge we face is to decide how to respond when an incident blows up online. This could be on almost any topic - in the last couple of years we've seen online storms relating to harassment, diversity, access, and racism (among others). These are of course all important issues which need a response; the question is, how should you react when the Internet is acting like a dog with a bone, latching on to one specific point (which may not be factually correct, or the whole story) and spreading that point wider and wider, louder and louder?

### *1. Early Warning*

The fundamental reality about these storms is that they are unexpected and fast-growing - and the wider they have spread, the harder it will be for ANY response to be heard. (More likely that it will be drowned out by the expanding ripples of repeats of the original story, by now on their fifth, sixth or tenth relay). So the first aim is to spot them early, while they can be dealt with. And this means quickly - even an hour can turn a local conversation into a runaway. So aim to have a social media team which is well connected to plenty of key bloggers and feeds, and also has alerts set up and queries to monitor your hashtag. Ideally have people in different timezones too.

### *2. Quick Decisions*

The next challenge is to make a quick decision on the response. Our organizations are not very good at this - we are not used to command and control structures, and we're often scattered around time zones and with a variety of work commitments. Where a government or corporate would call an immediate crisis meeting, we're playing tag trying to get the right people to talk to each other about options.... THIS DOESN'T WORK.

While we're thinking about what to do, the noise level and bubble is still expanding. So be clear in advance about how has authority to decide on an initial response - this should be at least two people, if not three, each of whom is ready take a decision.

### *3. Respond or Ignore?*

Now the issue has reached someone in authority, the first decision is simple: respond, or not. While it's always tempting to respond, sometimes one just has to ride out the storm. Where is the conversation going? Are there facts to be corrected? Will a response pour water on the flames, or gasoline? Is there a need to persuade people?

The key considerations here are generally (1) will the issue blow itself out on its own or is it gathering pace? (2) is the storm going to result in damage to the event or its reputation if allowed to continue? (3) can a response be made which will improve things/redirect the debate?

#### 4. *The Holding Response*

A holding response is often very effective where the situation is complex or the convention needs time to work out its position. Stay silent, and the online community may feel their concerns are not being heard. Act quickly, and it can slow things down and buy time.

A good holding response makes it clear that the concerns have been heard, and gives a specific timescale for a fuller answer - this really needs to be no more than 24 hours or people will become very restless.

A holding response also starts to put the convention back in charge of the situation. If you stay silent and then respond later, it may be perceived that you didn't want to face the issue, and were being forced into it, which will further colour perceptions.

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*“Should even one’s enemy arrive at the doorstep, he should be attended upon with respect. A tree does not withdraw its cooling shade even from the one who has come to cut it.”*

*Mahabharata 12.146.5*

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#### 5. *Clear, Factual, Forward Looking*

Having made a holding response, investigated, checked the facts, and decided that a longer answer is needed, it's now time to issue a formal statement. What is important here is to be clear, focus on facts, and above all be forward looking. That is, concentrate on what you plan to do next, and when you will do it by. Do not get drawn into the more emotional part of the debate no matter how intense the online discussion has become; it will only end badly.

#### 6. *Be Humble*

We all put a huge amount of effort into running conventions and we all like to be well thought of. Being misrepresented or accused of something you didn't do is an unpleasant experience and our basic spirit of fairness makes us naturally defensive. Therefore it is very easy to fall into the trap of explaining how the issue happened, how your intentions were misunderstood, how you did the best you could, etc.

**THIS DOESN'T WORK.**

When people are baying for blood, starting a response with anything that sounds defensive or apologetic simply draws more anger. What people are looking for is an apology or an acceptance that there is a problem - so defuse the situation and give that to them. It's far more difficult to stay antagonistic in the face of a humble response - and as things calm down, there will still be chances to put your side of the story out there.



## 7. Boosting the Signal

When the furore has gone really wide, it can be hard to get your response heard - it's frustrating if you've put out the right statement and all you're getting is more people coming in fifth-hand to dogpile on you.

Signal boosting is very helpful here. If you have good relations with someone with a high profile who has been involved in the discussion, contact them privately, talk to them about the reality, and ask them to point to your statement. If your statement is not yet finalized, but you want to slow things down, a controlled leak ("sources at the convention tell me that they'll shortly be announcing ....") can also be useful.

## 8. Stay Strong, Stay Alert

If all has gone well, and you have committed to the right actions, then things should gradually calm down. Of course, it depends on the issue: if there's been a genuine incident of concern (e.g. a serious harassment incident) then debate will go on. But if things are handled well, the emphasis will move from an attack on the convention for its inaction or failings, to an acceptance that the convention has behaved appropriately and a discussion on the wider issue as it affects fandom.

### Summary

The key recommendations in this article are simple to understand but hard to do well:

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*"Not everyone will like what you have to say. Not everyone will like what you do. Social networking is a garbage pile waiting for rats to feed. Pointless nothings of your everyday lives. Still the fumes rise."*

*- Jerica Barsht*

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Time really is of the essence; the faster you react, decide, and communicate, the easier it is to manage the conversation.

Recognize that you're dealing with an expanding bubble of righteous indignation - which after a few steps draws in people who may know nothing about the actual incident beyond what they have read in a couple of tweets or posts. This hive mind is not rational and not sympathetic to your pain. Let go of the emotion; be humble; be willing to apologize sometimes even if you have not done anything wrong.

*Reviewed – Shattering Conventions: Commerce,  
Cosplay, and Conflict on the Expo Floor  
By Bob Calhoun*

Two years ago after finishing my work with the Peace Corps in Ukraine and returning to the United States, I began attending meetings and social gatherings organized by my local San Francisco Bay Area science fiction community, wanting mostly to make friends and to learn what I might be missing in literature and film. While my reading and viewing lists have quintupled in length, I've noticed that those around me seem to spend more time discussing event planning and happenings in the community rather than science fiction or fantasy directly. SMOFs invest a great deal of personal time and finances in traveling, promoting, marketing, and delivering conventions that provide gathering places for those with common interests, who want to feel that they are among their own kind. Bob Calhoun, the author of *Shattering Conventions: Commerce, Cosplay, and Conflict on the Expo Floor* shares this need, even if he's not willing to take any part in planning.

In 2009, Calhoun, a fundraiser for the University of California at Berkeley, found himself with shortened work weeks due to budget cutbacks and so decided to spend 2010 visiting conventions with the aim of writing his book. He concocted no fancy hypotheses, but set out to a book that would “keep [readers] turning pages, generate some decent word of mouth and hopefully sell books here” (289). He delivers a narrative in which he attends not only San Diego Comic-Con and Star Trek conventions in San Francisco and Las Vegas, but, to name a few, the Twentieth Congress of the International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons, the Tattoo & Body Art Expo, the Republican National Convention, the National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) Convention, Twilight Con in Portland, Conspiracy Con, Hemp-Con, a Bigfoot Encounters conference, and Wrestlemania.

As they follow Calhoun through his odyssey, readers will find no insights about event planning or the running of conventions. Rather, Calhoun relates bizarre encounters with Klingons, Andrew Breitbart, anti-Obama conspiracy buffs, George Takei, Gavin Newsom, and the ghost of Elvis Presley. Through it all, the author comments on the drive toward community, not only among fans but among those who generate the objects of fan interest as well. Calhoun illustrates this point when discussing Comic-Con:

I went to Comic-Con expecting to come back full of complaints of how it wasn't like it was in 1992 when you could walk up to Kirby or DC Comics editor or even stop animation god Ray Harryhausen and they'd gab with you for a while like they knew you. With the intrusion of Hollywood execs and A-listers hyping their blockbusters, the present-day Comic-Con definitely maintained a greater barrier between stars both large and small and the people who came there to show their portfolios or compete in costume contests. But at Comic-Con, you could still bump into the stars at any time, and when you did, you were their peers—at least for the next four days. (206)

My experiences jibe completely with Calhoun's. Fans freely refer to Mercedes Lackey, Kim Stanley Robinson, and Samuel R. Delany as "Misty," "Stan," and "Chip" as if referring to these authors after having bumped into them only last weekend at a neighborhood barbecue. When I used to attend literary conferences, none would dare refer to T. S. Eliot and Robert Lowell as "Possum" and "Cal," even knowing that these august white men were no longer living. Similarly, Calhoun gets ejected from the one strictly professional conference into which he tries to sneak, the aforementioned gathering of plastic surgeons. That he couldn't gain proper entry speaks to the exclusiveness of such events, as it was with the literary conferences I once attended. Fan conventions, on the other hand, operate inclusively. George Takei sums it up nicely during a telephone interview with the author: "Conventions are an opportunity for people to find soulmates, a community that they feel part of . . . Star Trek has enjoyed incredible, really extraordinary dedication from fans, and for me Star Trek conventions are an opportunity for me to thank them" (184).

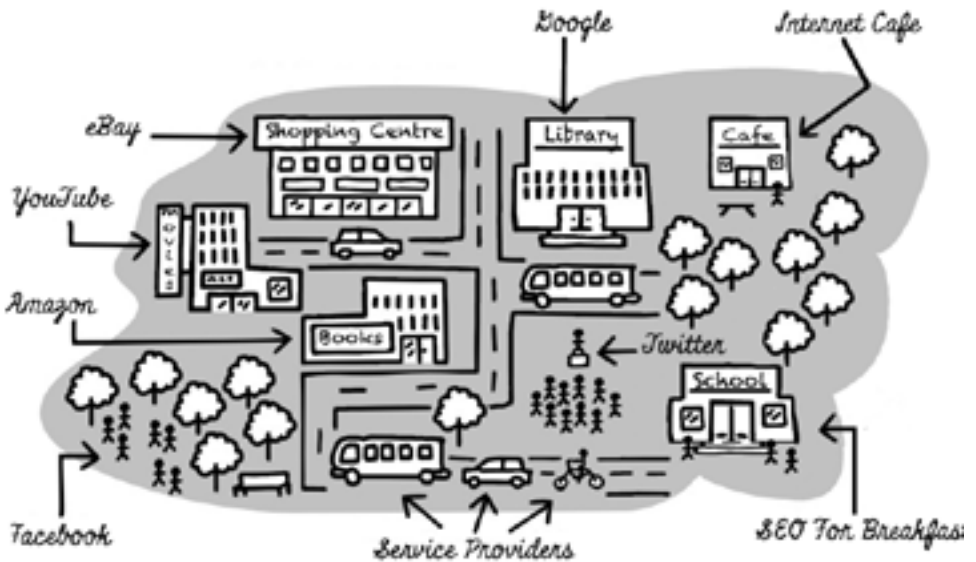


Those of a conservative stripe won't appreciate the political opinions of the author. Calhoun notes the deep political convictions of fans that form a spontaneous counter-protest in response to the presence of the Westboro Baptist Church at San Diego Comic-Con, and, he's none too shy about expressing his contempt to what he witnesses at the Republican National Committee.

The author's political stances will detract readers only if they don't agree with him. The book suffers more largely, however, from a lack of copy-editing. The numerous grammatical gaffes and typos rise far above the level of what some find endearing in fan writing. Listen, Bob Calhoun and Obscuria Press: such sloppiness distracts readers from the author's wonderfully funny content. Hire a copyeditor or fire the one you currently employ. To quote the famous drag queen Ongina when she was talking about HIV testing, "It's important!"

Fans should read *Shattering Conventions* to enjoy Calhoun's hilarious exploits and to remind themselves why they're involved in the adventure of science-fiction conventions, because whether we're SMOFs or the happily anonymous people who knit in the back row of panels, we belong to a community. Fans shouldn't, however, look for any exposition on the proper running of conventions. Enough about that labor of love is available from other sources.

## Life Before the Internet



*“Beginning today, treat everyone you meet as if he or she were going to be dead by midnight. Extend to them all the care, kindness, and understanding you can muster, and do so with no thought of any reward. Your life will never be the same.”*

*- Og Mandino*

# *Anger Management*

CARD! Card!

Screamed the old fucking hag from somewhere in the maelstrom of people pressing into the bar behind Jenem, who spun with furious anger, and as the thirty-something haggard old bitch pushed through the throng looking self-satisfied, a rage rose in Jenem, so vehement and sudden, rising up inside her and she so wanted to kick the woman with every ounce of her strength, all around the drinking and chatting contours.

She felt the tension in her jaw and knew that there was no winning this fight. Striking her down would enrage the Alphas. Instead she resorted to her childhood release of digging her nails into her palms.

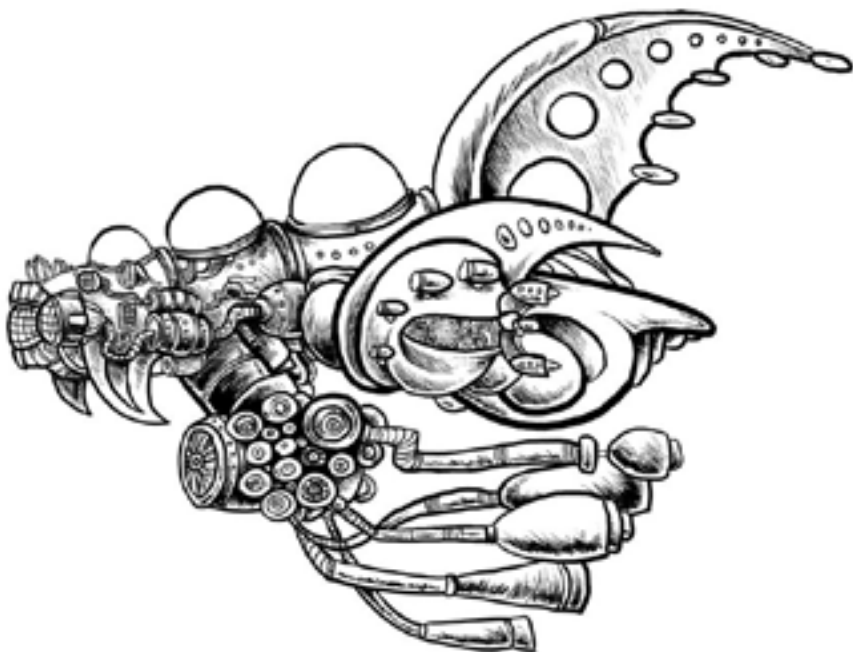
Card - uttered the woman, and despite the now more mannerly approach, she might well have been spitting venom, horrible fucking bitch. Jenem just turned deftly and made promptly for the exit of the speakeasy, passing by happy smiling faces all quenching their thirsts and needs. And she was out and gone and in a continuous moving river of people, jostling and laughing and talking. She knew nothing. Just red hot fury and frustration. That fellow at the bar had been about to serve her, he even smiled at her and now where was she. Fucked.

As she released one hand she felt the searing pain and just sucked it up. The upset was still there even if the flow of anger had eased slightly and she began to shake and feel a strange pain in her lower back and kidneys.

"It's all a load of fucking bullshit," said Moss. "They all know they are breaking ship state rules with these speakeasies and so-called private parties and not employing one properly licensed Drink Man, but that's ok for them, they never enforce the rules on themselves, just us."

Jenem had wandered around aimlessly angry, upset, unsure how to articulate or vent how she felt. The bitches working on the play, for whatever worth that was, without Emerald they'd be clawing the eyes out of one another, would offer no sympathy. Fucking working on some pointless derivative piece of shit. No originality but a rehash with themselves in key parts, such narcissism. But they didn't care who was in the audience once it was their voices that boomed across the box. And they'd as likely sneer or jeer her bad luck, no they wouldn't, they'd just be worse and say she was stupid and tell the whole ship on the ping network, worse than decompression. There was no point seeking out the boys, most of them were busy playing their electro sport.

And, oh there was no sexism in this modern egalitarian outer space



world, damn if that was true. The boys could race, flying around the track at incredible speeds, powered by direct current electricity, all acceleration, the abrasive nature of the trics acting as brake and they knew the adrenaline rush and craziness, turning it into a version of chicken at times, excitement coursing through their veins. But it got nasty, too. Throughout a trics race, a racer could literally push another off the circuit, in competition or malice, debris blockages suddenly appearing and purposeful blocks at the narrows, the speed and danger irrelevant, just the electric power in their hands and a look in their eye that she so wanted to possess. The fights always short, the smiles always wide afterwards.

Even improvising and personalising ballast weapons didn't seem as fun. She'd nearly missed out the whole session on hand to hand combat. Kicked a chair across the room when she realised. Luckily an officer had seen her anger, seemed actually impressed although expressed an exasperation and disappointment once she sat back down on it, as instructed. He had gently touched her shoulder, as she squeezed her nails in, imploring her gently to release, like she imagined a dad would, quietly and strongly telling her that she won't be here forever, you don't have to be, there are newer ships you know, with different rules and regs, as if he knew she wasn't just frustrated by the missed session, but could read her soul and its fucking self-centred sadness. He just about understood.



Why weren't they all like that? He said they had only her interests at heart and she believed him. The older bitches, well same age probably, but the officer had stealth age in his favour, those old Dragons who were only there because they would lose their privilege otherwise, were ready to slap each other into oblivion, only for the officer's knowing smile and calmness keeping control and she knew their self satisfied care was not at all real.

Even the Alphas liked this class of officer. Had to in a way, they were key. Bureaucrats are only so good with people and their authority was hollow without officers.

Unlike the breakers - she knew the officers would charm around rules and even just get the writers to change them in their favour. Such a position to be in.

His lieutenants were an odd mix, some were so relaxed and confident, others you wondered if they were in the right division, but the corps always had a calm cool exterior and she wished some of them would spend more time with her. She liked them but the seniority issue crept in. She never wanted to be an alpha, but being an officer already she knew she'd probably not fit right.

She wanted a different warm touch now, she wanted more. She would have loved to be with a breaker; if she had gotten a drink, she might have been a step closer. There were actually three talking in that speaker, incredible luck and one of whom was a girl, so rare, such a gem, and she knew that their presence had added to her crushing.

The breakers. Rule breakers. Bastards and they knew it. Although it was hard not to talk about them to others, to brag, to upset, but that would be self destructive. You never spoke about the rule breakers doing their thing, just about them.

She loved them. Their sweet talking, so smooth and dangerous, and there was an incredible pleasure to see the Dragons and even Alphas irked by the lines of red that would be left on them, indicating, if their smiles don't, that they had tasted what they felt was fresh sweetness. They were good, she knew



they didn't push you over, but like the wind, pressed gently enough to bend you with it, or even stand against it if you wanted, they would never take what wasn't to be given, but she heard it felt like that, perfect bliss.

The Bureaus hated them, hate hidden behind forms and rules and petty pointlessness, everyone wanted to be important, or justify their existence, and that meant getting one up somehow on someone else, such spirit the ship possessed, and all in the cause of some finer ideal that seemed somewhat lost in the reality of day to day life, gut-wrenching.

Moss was different. He was working on a plan, but within the system, had sought out funding, a rule breaker and officer had helped him out, threatened or bribed or maybe something nicer or worse with the bean counters, and so he could set up a juve club, but it wasn't really for Jenem as she was a little older, eighteen, but younger than Moss. But she knew that with space came privacy, and it was that sanctuary that she needed and made her way towards the Sixteen, as it was known.

"Bullshit," Moss continued as Jenem came back to the stress of the now. He was good in his own way, he might make an officer, never a rule breaker, although there was a bit of Bureau in there as well. Either way, she knew that later her friends, the real ones, older like herself, might make their way to Sixteen, and she could unwind a little.

'At least you were not pinged' and even he looked grateful, it was not an attempt to belittle or trivialise her situation, but the ship borne comm net was both official communications and gossip grape vine and lynch mob all in one. Alpha's would despise you if a proto-Alpha said a word against you, and if you had an official ping, it was like firing a ballast weapon at a coil magnet, certain destruction.

The room emptied of the kids and filled up with Janem's peers and ever so gently lights started to darken and the piped music was switched to easy piano. Emerald showed up and just gave her a hug, and then she unloaded.

Moss saw the last of the young ones out and moved the posse into the other corner, and they rearranged the furniture into a Picasso-esque style, using the secure bolts to give it all odd angles. Soon she relaxed and they talked and chatted. A fight had broken out and that was the ping scandal of the day, although as ever there wasn't the same admonishment, competitive spirit was OK. For her and Emerald the damnable system that predicted their routes upwards and the lack of fun, or what they considered fun was the issue. Damn their parents for choosing this ship, but then they wouldn't be on a ship only for it, and wouldn't be friends. It was so damnable. They laughed out loud, and shushed the blank looks.

There was a knock, and a rule breaker walked into Sixteen with a proto-Alpha on his arm. They were all frozen for a moment, but Moss knew him, and the breaker smiled all around, and slipped in away from the maelstrom outside. This one was playing a strange game. She knew him from some training exercises, he had been some kind of reserve officer, but he wore the garb of a breaker, and he swung in like smoke, the woman on his arm pretending nothing was happening, she smelled different, purposely ignoring them, and she was relaxed and smiled. He looked around with an incisive eye, a smile on his face, checking each one of them. He spoke with Moss, encouraged him a little and then they both cheerfully left.

What the fuck was that about, she asked. Hey, he is a fucking sponsor, OK, I don't ask how we get some shit done, but he helped us out. "And he left his flask," said Emerald, always the bright one. They all went straight to it. Kul picked it up, "It's full." "Now, now," said Moss, and soon they all had glasses, and were gently sharing out the nectar. Now this was more like it. Soon with sips they were laughing and they started up a game of shards. Later as the drink took hold they all decided to remove their upper fatigues and massage one another. It was good, one of the guys could really undo her shoulder blades with his elbow, and they usually didn't get this relaxed or informal, and it was just warm and good. Then Pearl did her thing where they breathe out and the vertebrae snap as she slammed down the palms of her hands, you'd scream but then it was good, especially with the drink on you.

After such delightful harshness, Emerald squeezed in, smiled in a kind sultry way at Pearl and was soon giving Jenem a gentle rubbing down, whispering wonderfully supportive curses in her ear, both of them cursing specific Dragons in their laughter. After a long time and as only was fair, Jenem rolled and started to massage Pearl's hands and fingers, and then Emerald's softly returning the pleasure in relaxed ease.

She was so relaxed she even told everyone about the proto-Alpha who threw her out, and the abuse and derogatory comments about her, had them all laughing, all sexual of course. They started to pair off a little sooner than she had hoped. Jenem was just so unsure with boys, she liked them, but she hated herself in many ways for not always liking what they liked. She would prefer a long hug and sweet tasting deep kisses from Emerald rather than a clumsy—well, a clumsy oaf. Yet Emerald had already made a move, as had Pearl, who was a frighteningly scary and strong prospect, and Jenem couldn't make up her mind whether it would be nice or just petrifying or both.

She saw Moss was avoiding it all, and then noticed that Sen was on his own, his curly hair so nice, and he was not all that bad looking she felt, and laughed, he was OK, she was drinking. She smiled and he moved over, and soon they were in a corner, surrounded by bolsters and bits of furnishing.

They fumbled and it was nice, but she wanted more, she wondered, and jumped up, and took Sen into the head. It was functional, but now totally private and that's what she needed. She hoped that now alone, he might push a little harder, try and take some, but he was letting her do all the work, and it was annoying. She wanted him to just devour her, and take her, she wanted it, it was okay, but how could she telepathically explain, she had to take his hand to put it on her ass, and then he gently caressed, for fuck's sake, she wanted to feel his lust and hunger, to probe and push, not be doted on, she was getting angry, she knew it, and this was always the problem, they were all so conditioned, which was fine, but she need more. There was a itch, but this boy was not going to scratch it and make it into the bliss that she wanted. She realised that she was as excited as a dead piece of bilge meat.

She didn't know whether to cry, or to die. So she took the lead, and in his satisfaction, she found something and she had been stirred as his hands had come around her head and she felt he might grip her locks tightly, but no, it was soft and gentle. Even so, she smiled at his speed and eagerness, and then his embarrassment as she tidied a drop from her chin. His reluctance to even kiss her then was palatable, and after initial amusement, this infuriated her, how could it be all one way, all the time. She started to get angrier. Didn't he even know that she



wanted to be taken, physically hard, and wanted to feel his energetic strength?

Just then there was a crash outside, and as she opened the door to the head, she saw that Ship's Bureau Agents had busted in the door of Sixteen and in came a flood of proto Alphas and Dragons. Moss was frozen, his hands on a girl, the rest of them scurried for their clothing and huddled, as the real bitches came in, PA's shouting and roaring and screaming at them, disgusting creatures who had no self respect, and it was a horror show of unbearable proportions as she felt herself marched out of Sixteen they were all lined up and berated. Meanwhile in the room, they could hear Moss being slowly broken, the Alpha's moved had in, wailing bringing him to tears as they went to work on him, his lack of moral strength and how he had denied all they were working for.

It was bedlam, and their parents, those selfish bastards who brought them here, and then smiled in self assured knowledge that they were giving their kids the time of their lives, when really it was just their selfish needs being satisfied would be told, their cards would be quickly scanned and messages blipped out on the system. The fucking system, jesus everyone would know in milli seconds.

Thoughtless disaster. Why couldn't they just leave them alone? An officer turned up, and some calm started to reign, and he made soft sounds and looked angry, but, Jenem looked at him long and when he caught her eye, she knew he was feigning it. He invoked the authority of the most senior Alphas and also some skirt wearing general guy far away and there was more quiet and calm.

A troop of lieutenants arrived as Moss was led out and stood next to them, a ragged bunch of pity and scorn.

At the head of the troop was that rule breaker, suddenly now in pristine uniform. There was saluting and talking, and most of the Dragons and Proto Alphas, pleased with their deeds and assured of merit ribbons, and happy that they had made someone else's life hell, although of course morally correct, which was all-important, were all excited and started to leave, job done. The officer in charge dismissed one who was more zealous than the rest, who obviously wanted to watch them endure more hardship and embarrassment.

Where the fuck had it gone wrong?

Moss was led out, and stood next to them. Jenem watched intently, they all did. Moss was clearly broken.

Now it was a naval matter. Things could get a lot worse, they could be physically punished, or she hoped it could go easier, maybe, just maybe. The rule breaker went up to Moss, their eyes met, and Moss leaned in towards him and whispered something, and she watched as he went into Sixteen and promptly came out, the top of his flask clearly visible in his tunic pocket.

The officers smiled discreetly. Moss had a faint sickly smile for a mo-

ment, but then it was gone. The other officer saw it slip away, and watched Moss slipping into despair, and grabbed him and pinned him to the wall. "You better keep fucking fighting, boy, or I will really fucking kill you." The suddenness and strength surprised them, and they didn't know what to make of it. Emerald just burst into tears, but Moss, straining to turn his neck, smiled at her and shushed her. "It's OK, they are on our side..."

There were no pings, no months wasted defending oneself, nothing on the comm at all. Officers spoke about rehabilitation, not discrimination and damnation.

Yet, the damage to the club was incredible. The Dragons had done a good job, slashing and obviously looking for contraband, wickedly being worse vandals than anyone they knew. It was repairable, and they were all stunned that the broader net had somehow never spoke of them.

There had been a quick bureaucratic movement of papers in Operations. The Proto-Alpha that had been with the breaker was assigned to over see them, but she was always with that Breaker and never really cared, or only enough to ensure there was no further trouble. She demoted Moss, assigned a younger and soon to be Proto-Alpha called Isej as directly in charge of Sixteen, but also promoted Emerald who was allowed to assume day to day command.

Isej younger and not as zealously dedicated, worried as much about impressing up the line, as being allegedly in charge, scoring the merit, happy to delegate to Emerald and perhaps ensure they were never caught again, while running what seemed like positive interference as she pinged out welcomes and timings of activities for Jives.

Everything had changed but nothing had changed. Moss had a merit ribbon taken away from him, but then was offered a position as a reservist trainee, which surprised them, but of course the officers would tell the Dragons and Alphas that it would be good morally for some discipline.

Sixteen was still a state of mind. A place where we are in charge and can escape after hours.

Yet Jenem knew she couldn't really escape. Couldn't go to a speakeasy and seek the attention and harsh intimacy that she sought, seek out a breaker and lean in and kiss him, and allow him to be with her, as much or as little as she wanted.

Yet the purpose of it all, in a way was for her future, and she hated what that looked like, and even if her future led her to another ship, a newer one with less peerage or she were to join the corps and change over ships, it was the same. It satisfied the Alphas and Dragons and their overall goals and that was horribly hypocritical.

No, she would leave, blast away, but settle, and they would never know and never realise, and just as they had pissed all over her inner hopes, she would silently destroy theirs.

# LoCBOX

## On Issue 16

November 30, 2013

Dear Chris,

Since you mentioned it, I did go back and look at Journey Planet #16. The (?) Squires in Glendale mentioned in Tim Powers' article is probably Roy Squires. Roy was a first fandomite and a major collector. He did live in Glendale.

As to material on PKD, Norm Metcalf has made comments on interacting with him in the sixties. Some future fanzine should ask him for an article on his contacts. Rey Nelson is another person who had contacts with PKD.

I never thought of *Eternal Sunshine of a Spotless Mind* in connection with PKD. Now that I think about it, the concept is like something Dick would have done, but the mood is entirely different. Romance with silly complications isn't a PKD sort of thing.

Yours truly,

Milt Stevens

***Having just read a little PDK right before I first saw Eternal Sunshine, it struck me that it was very similiar in theme, Now knowing that Michel Gondry is a HUGE PKD fan, it makes sense!***

***Hmmmm... those contacts may have to happen!***

***Thanks, Milt!***

## On Issue 17

Hi Chris, James, and Colin,

Just wanted to drop you a line to tell you how much I'm enjoying Journey Planet #17. I've never been to a Worldcon and, being unlikely to be able to attend one in the near future, had gotten rather down on the whole idea - "it's just another con," "I'm not missing that much," and other assorted sour grapes. While JPI7 (obviously) hasn't made it any more likely that I'll be able to attend a Worldcon anytime soon, it's at least gotten me excited about the idea again. Congrats on pubbing an awesome ish.

Take care,

Jason Burnett

With regard to conventions being Don Wollheim's idea. Even if you accept that Philly meeting as the first con - I don't - Wollheim didn't come up with the idea. I refer you to this page for the arguments/evidence:

<http://www.fiawol.org.uk/fanstuff/THEN%20Archive/1937conFirst.htm>--

Rob Hansen

[www.fiawol.org.uk/FanStuff](http://www.fiawol.org.uk/FanStuff)

***we have a lot of fights at the Museum over one concept - What was the first computer? My argument is it's an important question (and there is no other question that gets asked of me by students than that) and the rest of the team say there is no answer and we have to skirt it. I say what you gotta do is set a definition, research the hell out of it and make a call.***

***Now this, in many ways, is the matter of who performed the first concert on the Internet. The Rolling Stones spent months hyping that they were going to be the first band to play a live concert on the internet using a technology called The M-Bone. Well, two hours before they went on, a group of Technologists who can play a little called Severe Tire Damage beat them to the punch. Apparently, it was done very much on a last-second thing.***

***So, they were the first Live Concert on the Internet, and NOT the Rolling Stones, because even though the idea was the Rolling Stones (management team, most likely), they weren't the first. The ones who Actually MANAGED it were the first. In this case, it was Philly over Leeds, though to be fair, neither had the impact that the first WorldCon would. Although I think Bob meant that the Philly con was his idea.***

Dear Chris (and James and Colin):

As promised (or threatened) on Facebook, you look like you're about to get another Journey Planet on the go. So, here are comments on issue 17 to help you get finished up with issue 18.

You always have such interesting cover art...you've got such a variety of artists to draw upon, and the internet is full of such art, if you know where to look, which it appears you do. Literally today, in searching for a particular business card, I found Delphyne Woods' cards. At the Reno Worldcon, she greeted us as old friends, gave us her cards, and said she would support us if we decided to go for TAFF. And now, she is gone too quickly.

In some ways, Worldcon programme books are the annual time capsules of science fiction. I remember seeing full collections of them at Worldcons, especially the gold-covered first Worldcon programme book of 1939. I think it's great to bring those to your readership, also for the great artwork on the covers. We sometimes fail to acknowledge how important the artists are to your visualization of science fiction. Fandom also sometimes takes a swipe at Worldcons as being a lumbering beast, overpriced and overly complicated. There's a grain of truth in every opinion, but given that we're coming up on 75 years of Worldcons, we've got to keep it going for as long as we can.

I spoke to Dave Kyle in November when he was the FanGoH at SFCONtario 4 in Toronto. We'd met several times before, but he didn't remember me. Yvonne's mother is suffering from mild dementia, and has a habit of asking the same question about a dozen times in an hour or so...her short-term memory is gone. Dave did the same thing to me. I was quite patient, and his daughter thanked me for looking after him while she got him some lunch. Everyone, treasure him while he's still with us.

I cannot get to many Worldcons, but over the years, I have certainly enjoyed them all, and also enjoyed the feeling of being at the heart of fandom by being there. Same goes for the Hugos. I loved being a nominee in 2010, and Yvonne and I handing one out in Montréal. Perfect Worldcons may not exist, but for me, the best one is one that close by and affordable. Montréal was great in that we could drive there, we got a room with a kitchenette, and we did a grocery order on our way in. We'd be busy with things, so we enjoyed the hotel breakfast each morning, and we'd make our own lunches for later in the day. It was easy to be there, and take part in things, and fulfil our commitments.

Ah, there's Dave and Roger and Bob Madle. I don't see these folks as often as I'd like. The Simses are great folks, and they often run the green room at Worldcons. I think they did in Reno. There are times when I just want to chuck this whole fandom thing, more time than I care to admit, but I see people like Dave and Roger and Bob who are still coming to Worldcon after all these years. They've lost a lot of friends over the years, but are still coming, being wise enough to make more friends who are younger. There's something there that means they will continue to come to Worldcon, and have done so for 60 or more years. I stick around because I want to find that these guys have found, and I think I am well on my way. Worldcon changes every year to suit the committee that stages it, and the people who attend it. Fandom moves on, and us mere humans, no slans are we, tend to stay in one place, and wish for those days to return.



We are such conservative consumers of a mostly liberal genre.

Pictures from fandom in the 50s are great, especially seeing our fannish forefathers in suits. When did jeans and t-shirts start, anyway? I have various memories of Worldcon, but nothing I can really bring to mind and write an article about. I admit that as I write, I am getting a little sad, for I know that my Worldcon attendance is largely or completely past. We plan to make a firm decision about our going by May 1, and I hate to say that I pretty-well know what it will be.

Thank you for the programme book gallery. I am pleased to be able to say that some years ago, I purchased some of those early books. I have close to hand the books for the 11th (Philcon II, 1953), 17th (Detention, 1959), 18th (Pittcon, 1960) and 20th (Chicon III, 1962) Worldcons. The first Worldcon I actually attended was Chicon IV in 1982.

I honestly believe that Loncon 3 will be our last Worldcon, if we can go. And yes, I've said that before. But I simply cannot accept that we might go to more; they're simply too much for us in many ways. So, I keep track of the bids, but haven't supported any of them. (Washington has become the choice for 2017. And, I think there might be a bid for an 8th Chicon in 2022. I am just pleased there are still bids for future years.)

Almost two pages, and that's not bad at short notice. I hope you can use this! Many thanks for this great issue, hope your Christmases were stellar, and Happy New Year and Hogmanay to all of you sterling editors. May 2014 be a better year for all.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

***While that Cover gallery was the fiddly-est thing I've ever laid out (at least 5 times I laid it out!) it's also one of my faves. I've always wanted to buy the Pacifcon program book they've got on sale at Wondercon every year. It's signed by every single pro who attended, and quite a few fen too! The only reason I haven't bought it? They want something like 3 grand!***

*“If 50 million  
people say  
something  
stupid, it’s  
still stupid.”*

*- Rolf Dovelli*

