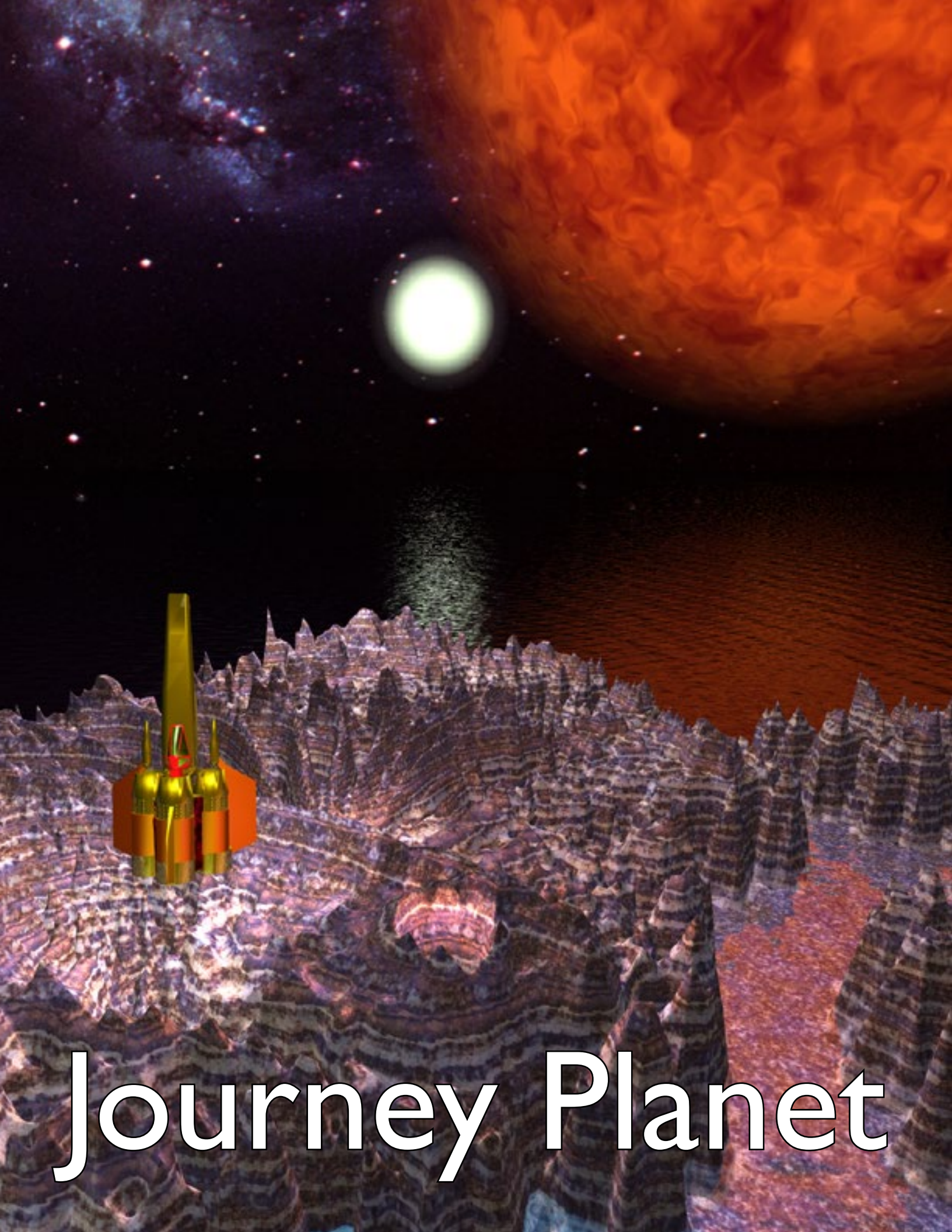

Journey Planet

Journey Planet 35 - Programatic - Nov. 2017

~Editors~

Chris Garcia, James Bacon, Steven H Silver

Introductions/Editorials/Whatever You Want to Call 'em

Steven H Silver

The issue of Journey Planet you hold in your hands, or more likely are reading on a tablet, phone, or computer, has its genesis in two ideas.

In 2009, I published a special edition of my fanzine, *Argentus*, entitled *Argentus Presents the Art of the Con*, in which I asked several con-runners to talk about the ins and outs of putting together a science fiction con. It isn't exactly a how-to guide, but it offers suggestions, warnings, and lessons learned.

Earlier this year, I began compiling a list, with descriptions, of all the panels I've participated in since I showed up on fandom's doors back in the 1980s. I began to wonder how authors would approach those topics today if they were given the chance to expound without the interruptions of other panelists or audience members. One of the authors, Nancy Kress, included a note with her submission stating "It felt strange writing what I would have said on a panel, with no panel. I kept waiting for [James]Patrick Kelly or [James] Van Pelt to interject something," which is exactly what I was hoping for.

I discussed these ideas with James Bacon and Chris Garcia and we decided to do this programming issue of *Journey Planet*, with articles on running programming provided by con-runners with experience in the area interspersed with essays responding to panel topics by a variety of authors.

For each of the essays, I've included the original title and description, the names of the panelists (where known), and the date and convention which featured the discussion. The one constant for all of the panels is that I was one of the participants.

A couple of the articles are reprints from *Argentus Presents the Art of the Con*. Re-reading the issue while preparing for this issue of *Journey Planet*, I asked a few of the authors if they would be willing to let me include their articles, giving the authors the chance to revise and update what they wrote eight years ago.

And, to demonstrate that all ideas can lead to a programming item, I'll also be using the list of panels I've participated in as the jumping off point of a panel on writing panel descriptions and titles at this year's SMOFCon in Boston the first weekend of December.

Christopher J Garcia

More than anything else, these days, I'm a Dad. It's weird. It's really weird. I mean really, really, really weird. There are two tiny humans, both with the world's most adorable noses, who think I'm their Papa.

And at times, it gets in the way, but with co-editors like Steven, it makes these issues happen! So thanks to y'all!!!

I should also mention, as we're talking about cons in this issue, I'm going to be the Fan Guest of Honor at BayCon next year! I'm going to be pushing ideas, as I always do, for programming to make happen. There'll also be significant fanzine content.

I wanna thank all the incredible contributors Steven managed to strong-arm! It's a pretty impressive list of folks!

So, with this final bit of build-up, we present the Programatic issue of *Journey Planet!*

On the Art - The Cover is by Dick Jenssen, aka Ditmar! So, I took or composed all the art in this issue, largely taken with my iPhone. Pages 4, 7, 25, 33 I took at the Cantor Museum of Art at Stanford, Pages 3, 8, 9, 14 and 18 I took at the Triton Museum of Art in Santa Clara, CA. Pages 29 and 49 were from BayCon 2017 (and have I mentioned I'm the Fan GoH in 2018?). The rest are from SFMoMA. Page 47 is a still from my appropriation short film TechTrai20196717, Page 13 is my photo Collage Serra Bowl, Page 27 is Panic at the MoMA, and Page 29 is Gilbert & George at the Movies. I actually heard from their people on that one. They liked it!

Convention Programming
by Mike Willmoth

I first entered sf/f fandom in 1987 with CactusCon (NASFiC 1987) in Phoenix, AZ. My first position was Senior Staff for Computer Gaming with my then-girlfriend, now-wife. In 1988 I became involved with the database support for pre-con Programming that a friend was running for Westercon 41, also in Phoenix. The next thing I knew I had volunteered to run Programming in 1989 for LepreCon 15. Since then I've been Program Director or Program Division Head for CopperCon 11 (1991, Scottsdale, AZ), Westercon 45 (1992, Phoenix), and ReConstruction (NASFiC 2010, Raleigh, NC). I've also been Science Program Liaison or the equivalent for ConJose (Worldcon 2002, San Jose, CA), TorCon 3 (Worldcon 2003, Toronto, ON), LACon4 (Worldcon 2006, Anaheim, CA), and Chicon 7 (Worldcon 2012, Chicago, IL).

Programming is all about managing resources to produce an optimal program schedule. What are those resources? People, function rooms, equipment, and the program items you want or need to offer. It sounds simple enough, but it can also be a lot of work. I've done most of the work myself (with local cons) and I've outsourced most of the work to my team (with NASFiC, for example). I recommend getting as many folks involved as possible to help you run programming to prevent burnout. It also gives you a number of people to cross-check your (or your team's) work to prevent errors or conflicts. The minimum number of people to handle a local con should be three: one to contact and communicate with potential program participants; one to provide database support, such as data entry or reports; and one to generate the program schedule. For a larger event, such as Westercon or NASFiC, consider using more people. Worldcons need even more staff and recent ones have used dozens for everything from track liaison (one person concentrates on costuming while another handles filking, etc) to room monitors.

If you're just starting out, then how do you begin? Assuming you're doing a local con, find two others who want to help. They can take turns doing stuff or they can be dedicated to one of the tasks mentioned above. As Program Director you should be the ring-master, so do the contacting and communicating. But whom do you contact? Pre-privacy-concerns days we used to pass around participant lists between organizations and conventions to share the information. I remember receiving Westercon 43 and 44 participant data for use with W45 and, in turn, I sent ours along to W46 and W47. Nowadays that may violate your privacy statement. Social Media sites, such as Facebook, or websites, such as author pages, can produce contact information for many potential participants. Make sure to have a way for folks to contact you via your own con website if they're interested in participation. Although some conventions call these folks "Guests", I always use "Participant" to differentiate between them and the Guests-of-Honor. The former usually attend on their own dime while the latter usually are partially or totally covered by the convention. Sometimes conventions subsidize participants if they want to get someone special; W45 did this when we had a female astrophysicist from Italy come out to talk about using radio telescope data to produce music (you don't get that every day).

While you're reaching out to potential program participants, have your team work on possible program

item topics. Don't be shy about stealing from other events, including Worldcon or even the larger ones. For W45 I used specialists in specific areas (comings, gaming, literature, etc.) to submit ideas to me that resulted in a Participant Questionnaire that was 10 dual sided pages (back then we mailed out most of our stuff), including the cover letter and response page. I originally used dBase 3+ for creating the participant database, the program item database, and the linking database for putting people with program items. Then I used R&R Report Writer to take these databases to produce reports, such as a participant's individual schedule or a list of what things will happen in this room on that day. Today, most cons use online tools for collaboration, like Grenadine or its ilk. This allows you to use multiple people for entering ideas, participant data, etc. It certainly centralizes the data for your team to access. Back in the day I'd just email out updates to the files...

What sorts of things do you ask (either by mail, email or web) in a Participant Questionnaire (PQ)? Well, what do you need to know? Contact info: name, address, email, social media contact, phone, etc. to start. When are they available? Dates, times, what to avoid (like dinner or Masquerade). Also importantly, are there any persons with whom they'd be unwilling to serve on a panel discussion? There's usually one or two names that get mentioned. Some Program Directors (PD's) let the participants choose what they'd like to do (panels, presentations, workshops, demonstrations, etc.) and some prefer to select what they'll be on based on their PQ responses. I'm definitely in the former camp, but have been know to put folks on things to either round out the item or to give someone the minimum number of items to either get comped or get a potential refund. Whether your convention gives comp memberships to qualifying participants or whether you require memberships to be purchased is pretty much up to your Chair or head shed to decide. Just be clear up front which of these is the policy and let potential participants decide to sign up or not. Getting the PQ responses into the database can be a lot of work, but if using an online tool, then the participants themselves can respond to a webform and the results can be inserted into the database online. I've also seen emailed form responses sent to the PD who then runs a script to "scrape" the data into a spreadsheet. Yet in the early days we just used 3"x5" cards (well, I didn't, but I know lots who did).

At this point you've got someone contacting potential participants and you've got someone generating program item ideas. You need someone to start working on the schedule. Why? Well, you have to account for function space usage for things like Masquerade, Dances, awards ceremonies if applicable, etc. I generally use graph paper, create a grid for a given day with times along the Y axis and rooms along the X axis, then use a pencil to put things in. Today, online tools allow you to enter the day/time/room/equipment data and it will generate the grid or equivalent for you. As PD you need to decide how you / your team are/ is going to schedule folks. My personal preference is to start with the fixed functions (mentioned above) followed by the Guests-of-Honor, then Big Name Pros / Fans. From there you can do Medium Name Pros / Fans, etc. One big help here is to put on the PQ a blank line for Priority. Namely, does your GoH want to really really do this panel? H for high, M for medium, L for low. This has worked really well for me. If you're lucky, once you accommodate all of the H's you're pretty much done. If you have to supplement with some M's, great. I have rarely used L's unless I need to fill in a hole in a panel discussion. Sometimes cons use a Guest Liaison to handle all GoH communications while others allow Programming to also contact them. Find out in advance.

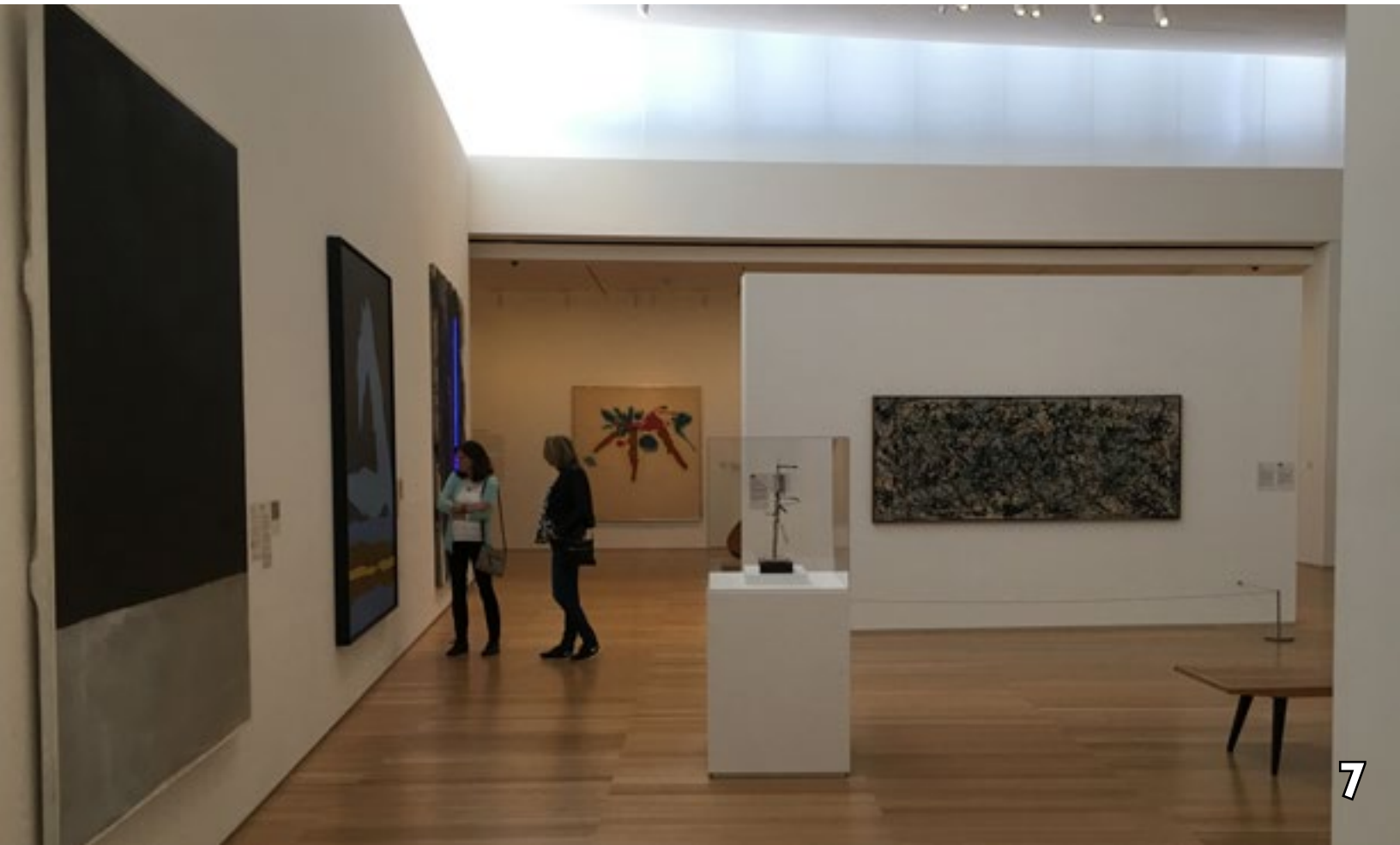
Of course, how many participants do you put on a panel discussion? I recommend no less than three and no more than five. If necessary, you can also designate alternates in case someone doesn't show or you have an exuberant participant who really wants to do something that's already full. Choosing a Moderator is a big challenge, too. That's a field that appears on my PQ's. But just because someone wants to be a Moderator, that doesn't mean they should be. With experience comes knowledge so selecting someone to do this responsibly takes input from others, desire from the participant, and you're own experience. Just choose wisely or you may have to deal with a fist fight in front of an audience :-)

Once you receive most of your responses to your PQ your scheduler can begin to work on the finer details. As PD you should review that team's results regularly in case something needs attention. Schedule conflicts should be addressed with the system's reports. I recommend coming up with a preliminary schedule a couple of months out, if possible, for a local con and farther out for bigger ones. Why? Well, many of the participants will want to make changes. Implementing them takes time and if you have a minimum number

of items for refund eligibility you want to try to reach that. Locally, we used (number of days of event minus one). So a four-day Westercon required at least three program items. We excluded signings from this, but included kaffeeklatches. Your policies may differ. Also, if they were willing to do at least the minimum, but you or your team couldn't make that happen, then they still qualify because of their willingness. Again, your policies may differ, but to be fair that's what I've done. You should also have a maximum number of program items; some pros may want to dominate the schedule and you should limit them from doing so.

After you send out your schedule, and receive input on changes, it begins to solidify. Now what? Well, the pre-con team is about done and ready to hand things off to the at-con team, also known as Program Operations. This team, which may or may not be the same people as the pre-con team, must implement the schedule and handle any last minute changes that come up. People don't arrive on time, or get sick, or forget to show up, or equipment fails, water on the head table needs changing, name placards do have to be printed (pre-con) and handed out (at-con), etc. Make sure you have a room, either sleeping or function, where your PO team can operate. Sometimes this is combined with Green Room (a place where participants can hang out right before their event to collaborate) and sometimes is standalone. You'll need a computer, printer, office supplies, backup equipment, etc. here. And it needs to be staffed, possibly in shifts. It should open prior to the day's start of programming and end prior to the day's last event. Some fans love pre-con only; some love at-con only; some love both. You also may want to collect attendance statistics, namely, how many people show up for a given program item? Do you check once per item or twice, once near the beginning and once near the end? How about feedback boxes and cards for folks to comment on the item itself for future use? Your Chair or head shed may dictate some of these policies, while you may want to do it on your own to pass along to future PD's.

Once the convention is over you now should consider contacting everyone who participated one last time and ask for feedback, thank them for participating, and (if appropriate) let them know when to expect to receive a reimbursement should that be your policy. As PD this will probably fall to you to do, but maintains a professional air to the operation and, hopefully, provides additional data for future use. Some cons use the same team year after year; some recycle every few years; some teams dissolve and never return. It's not for everyone, but if you're detailed and like a challenge this job's for you!



Interfacing Programming and Tech for regional conventions

David Ifversen

I deal with tech for several regional conventions, ranging in size from 200 to 1500 members. (Tech for something the size of a Worldcon is a completely different beast, and is beyond the scope of this article, even though many of the underlying principles will still apply.)

We will generally have a large room designated as the main stage, with a stage, multi-channel sound system, simple stage lighting, and possibly a video projector and a large screen (depending on needs). This room will be used for opening/closing ceremonies, music concerts or other stage shows, and GoH panels expected to draw a large audience. There may also be a room set up for films (or, these days, media). In addition, there will be several breakout/panel rooms. For accessibility reasons, each of these rooms should have (if the budget allows) a microphone at the head table plugged in to the 'house' sound system. The Tech Crew consists of anywhere from 1 to 10 people, depending on available volunteers, with the head of the group (at least) knowing how to set up and run everything. For the cons I'm involved with, the Tech Crew is a separate group – for other cons, I've seen the Tech Crew sourced from Program Ops.

What I've found that works best for the panel rooms is to designate one room as 'the A/V room', and schedule any panels that need A/V support in that room. If you're renting equipment, a projector, screen, cart, and cables will cost anywhere from $600 to $1500 for the weekend, depending on the equipment and where it is rented from – unless you've got a big budget, you will probably only have one such setup for the panel rooms, plus any setup(s) needed for the main stage or film/media room. Doing it this way means you only set up the equipment once (provided that you can lock the room after the day's panels are finished), rather than running the Tech Crew ragged moving the equipment from room to room throughout the day.

Programming and Tech should start working together early in the planning process. The equipment needed will have to fit in the budget, and it must be reserved from the rental house (or the hotel, if you're renting from them) far enough in advance to make sure everything is available (this time frame can be determined by a simple call to the rental house or hotel A/V vendor, and passed on to the Programming group during planning). The Programming group should find out what type of computers the presenters will be using, and whether or not they have their own video cable adapters – there's nothing as annoying as having a presenter show up with an Apple computer with the Apple video output du jour, and having to scramble to find the appropriate adapter. (Almost all projectors will have VGA and NTSC (and/or S-VHS) inputs. Some will also have DVI (digital) and/or HDMI inputs as well. Adapters are available to convert from just about any computer output to VGA.) Knowing which type of adapters may be needed in advance means you can have them available. Also, some presenters may need special input devices like document cameras or DVD/BluRay players – Programming should be able to find this out and pass the info on. Tech will also need to know about any concerts or stage shows, if there will be a dance that needs equipment (although, most dance DJs will have their own), or any other event that needs equipment. Sometimes this info comes from Programming, and sometimes there will be a Special Events group that handles this. (The most unusual event I have dealt with was an outdoor show at a con that involved a couple of large high voltage tesla coils that played music through the electric arcs. We had to rent and set up a 100kW diesel generator in the parking lot to power the coils.)

With careful planning and good communication, there should be no surprises when the convention weekend finally rolls around.

Thinking About Programming (with Endnotes)
by Priscilla Olson

OK…I can make allusions to planting a garden (um, "compost" and all)—or giant jigsaw puzzles (which example, alas, tends to leave out the "artistic/organic" part of the process.) How about cellular protein synthesis: there are such great analogies implicit in replication and transcription, and what about those polypeptides (panel items?) produced at the ribosomes (program heads?) No….let me try to do this straight.

This essay is not really meant to discuss how to put together a program for a science fiction convention. It is a look at some of my thoughts on the subject of programming

(Note, however, that practice is informed by policy—what one does and how one does it are direct consequences of what one's philosophy is on the subject. Because of this, there will almost certainly be some how-tos embedded in the text.)

These ideas apply to both Worldcon programs[1] and to those of smaller conventions. It will attempt to explore my thoughts on some basic issues someone programming a convention should consider—and, if at all possible, implement.

Who is the program for?

The program is for your convention community. It is not for the program head. It is not for the chair of the convention, or for any specific guest(s) of the convention. It is not for the convention that someone thinks you should have or for the one someone wants to have in the future. Program heads who refuse to understand this concept, should not be doing the job.

Can one incorporate items into the convention that serve the other causes listed above? Of course! (In fact, it would be ridiculous not to do so. The program must not devolve into a stagnant reflection of the past!) But because the program is conversation between members of the convention (see below), the program head is responsible for putting together a program that is first and foremost for the people who will be there and who have certain expectations of that particular convention—and that program should be balanced[2] accordingly.

What is the program for?

Teresa Nielsen Hayden once described the program as orchestrating[3] "the conversation of the convention" and that's a great short summary. The main job[4] of the program head is to put together a schedule of interesting topics staffed with interesting people who'll talk about them in ways that extend the conversation to the convention. The conversation (two-way or multi-way interactions) takes place between and among the members of the convention community[5]—all of them at one time or another if the job is done well. A really great program is one whose ideas are still being discussed days later by people who didn't even attend the original program item!

So what makes a good conversation? In a nutshell: lively, knowledgeable, articulate people talking to each other, interactively[6] about some interesting subject.[7]

So, the program is basically produced by joining together ideas and people to best deliver these ideas—but it's really about more than that. After all, it's pretty easy to generate ideas (even good new ideas),[8] and not even that hard to get pretty good people to present them. The trick lies in combining them right, and scheduling them properly. The program head[9] might best be thought of us of an editor, striving for an interesting balance of ideas and people that will let him turn his visions into realities. Knowing the field and the potential program participants helps: imagination and creativity are important—but obsessive attention to details is essential. (Lots of people don't understand that part.) To produce a really good program, the devil is in the details.[10]

What is the responsibility of the program head?

First, do no harm. Do nothing to enrage or embarrass program participants, members of the convention, the committee, etc[11]

Do your best. Try not to get lazy: do not take the easy way out. Think. Stay alert. Seize opportunities. Use people. Use technology.[12]

Communicate. (Be polite about it, too.) Answer every piece of paperwork/queries in a reasonably timely and affable manner. (Even if it kills you—but don't assume that anyone has actually read anything sent to him/her.)

Realize life isn't fair. (And you don't have to be fair either).[13]

Balance. Burnish. Balance again.[14]

Try to have fun. If you're not having fun, that will be reflected in the program, and in you, too. It's often a big, hellish, and frequently fraught job.[15]

Sometimes those of us involved forget it's only a con, and that real life is more important.

Why do we do this?

For the sake of the trust.[16]

1 - I think it's important to note that for a Worldcon, program is more a giant area than a division: it concentrates, basically, on one (admittedly large) project, and I think that makes it differ from the other standard Worldcon divisions. Additionally, in many ways, programming for a Worldcon is easier than programming for a smaller convention. For the former, one has nearly unlimited resources: space, people, time, etc. Generally, too, a Worldcon is meant to be strongly inclusive; practically anything goes. A smaller convention is lapidary work; it's all about precision, and is frequently harder to do.

2 - When you get right down to it, programming is really about balance. That word will show up again and again in this discussion. Serious? Fannish? How much of one topic? How much fringe? How much specific? How much abstract? Etc. While I can describe how I can sometimes achieve this balance by staring at a giant piece of foam core covered with scraps of paper and going into a Zen-like trance (allowing me to see the convention holistically) and then applying feng-shui principles to it, that would sound like the claptrap it probably is. Sorta works for me, though. Find your own way, grasshopper…

3 - And like a conductor, the program head isn't actually making the music (though some insist on a very, um, hands-on performance of the job), but balancing all parts of the orchestra so the performance is better than the orchestra could have done by itself.

4 - Please note that I am making some distinctions between "job" and "responsibility" here. While the former is merely a description of what someone does, the latter has, I believe, personal and moral connections and implications, some of which will be dealt with in the following section. Just want to make that clear.

5 - For example, because I strongly believe a convention should be a community, I'm opposed to closed-door writing workshops at most of the conventions in which I'm involved. I believe such workshops foster inwardly directed behavior (navel-gazing, if you will) that isolates and often selects for people who do not truly become part of the convention community as a whole.

6 - I hate, hate, hate "panels" where individuals are essentially encouraged to give their oration/agenda on a topic, seriatim. (And then the audience starts. Gack.) Hate.

7 - Though it is a truth universally acknowledged that the right people can make anything interesting.

8 - Yeah, ideas are easy—doing them right is hard. I am strongly against sending program participants checklists of ideas. I am aware that this is a bit of a "religious" issue, but since over a third of my good ideas for each convention comes directly from said program participants (the remaining 2/3 split between coming from myself or swiped from other convention), I'd be foolish to try to do a program so robotically.

9 - I think a strong "buck-stops-here" decision maker at the center of the programming process is vital, whose word should not be overruled even by the chair. This feeling has strengthened as I've gained more experience in convention programming. One result of this, for example, is that I used to be much more comfortable with "road-show" panels (put together by outside groups): I am now far less inclined to schedule them than I have been in the past.

10 - There are too many things to even start to go on about here: just think how many pages could be written about counter-programming the convention's Guests, for example.

11 - OK, there are a lot of fairly subtle ways of taking revenge on the assholes who have made your life miserable during the course of your position as program head. Just make sure it looks nice on the outside.

12 - And/or get someone on your staff who can and will!

13 - Just to clarify one possible spin-off of this: I think treating fans on the program differently from pros on the program is abhorrent. Program participants are there because of what they can contribute to the conversation of the convention community—and the convention should be encouraging conversation, not idolatry

14 - See #2 above.

15 - It's still is my favorite job on a convention. That sez something, huh?

16 - With a fond nod to the Musgrave Ritual…

The Windy City Gang
by Mike Resnick

The History of SF/F in Chicago

Did you know that Fritz Leiber, James Tiptree, Jr., and Fred Saberhagen all once lived in Chicago? Have you ever heard about the secret trips made by some of the Chicon III attending authors to the Playboy headquarters during the 20th Worldcon? Chicago has a rich SF/F history. Please join some of Chicago's most preeminent fans and scholars as they share tales from our fandom's marvelous history.

Steven H Silver (M), Alice Bentley (via Skype), Barry Lyn-Waitsman, Leah Zeldes Smith

Panel held at Capricon XXXII, February 11, 2012

Steven Silver has asked me, as someone who was born and grew up in Murder City—excuse me: make that Chicago—to do a little survey about the major science fiction writers who lived and worked in the area.

Happy to do it. You'd think that what was the second-largest city in the country—probably only #3 by now—would have the second-highest concentration of writers, but that's not the way these things work. Until a couple of decades ago, well over 90% of all publishing was done in New York, and living in a non-New York megalopolis just meant that your living expenses were higher than the average American's. It was in no way a boon to your career.

The first major writer of fantasy and science fiction to reside in the Chicago area was Edgar Rice Burroughs, who lived in Oak Park, a Chicago suburb, while he was telling Hulbert and John Coleman, his young sons, bedtime stories about John Carter on the planet Mars. (Well, Barsoom, but let's call it Mars, since that's what it was.) His first few Mars and Tarzan books were sold while he was living in Oak Park. As soon as he could afford it, he bought a huge chunk of land in the Los Angeles area, which soon became incorporated and has been known as Tarzana for the past century. But he did start his phenomenal career in the shadow of the Windy City.

Then there was the son of a Shakespearean actor who attended the University of Chicago just before World War II broke out. He, too, was an actor with a deep resonant voice, but he also wrote science fiction and (especially) fantasy. His most famous early

creations were Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser. Right, we're talking about Fritz Leiber, the first of the Chicago crew to become a Worldcon Guest of Honor. In fact, he was Worldcon's GOH twice, in 1951 and 1979. He left Chicago just before World War II broke out, returned for another dozen years in 1945, writing fiction (and editing *Science Digest*) all the while.

There's one major science fiction figure worth mentioning, even though he wasn't really a writer, and that's Ray Palmer, the eccentric little hunchback who edited *Amazing Stories* long enough to entice Edgar Rice Burroughs into the magazine and to create the Shaver Mystery, an embarrassment to the whole field, especially after some of the mainstream magazines began making fun of it. Palmer left *Amazing* in 1949 to become an editor/publisher of *Other Worlds* and (especially) *Fate Magazine*. All of his editing, for Ziff-Davis and for himself, was done in the Chicago area.

Another visitor was Cyril M. Kornbluth, who—along with Don Wollheim, Fred Pohl, Doc Lowndes, John Michel, and others—was one of New York's original Futurians. After the war he settled in Chicago to continue his education at the University of Chicago, but by 1951 he was so busy collaborating with Pohl and Judy Merril that he found it more convenient to move back to New York.

Harlan Ellison spent a little time in the Chicago area while he was editing *Rogue* for Bill Hamling. Harlan was the Guest of Honor at the 1978 Worldcon, and is the proud possessor of 7 Hugos.

Frank M. Robinson also edited *Rogue,* and wrote *The Playboy Advisor* column for Hugh Hefner's magazine. Frank also wrote speeches for Harvey Milk and later appeared in the film, *Milk,* based on the politician's life. His major economic triumph was co-authoring *The Glass Tower* with Tom Scortia; it was not only a bestseller in its own right, but became one all over again when it was the basis for the megahit movie *The Glass Inferno.* Toward the end of his life Frank won a Hugo for *Science Fiction of the 20th Century.*

Algis J. Budrys was born in Prussia, moved here at the age of 5 when his father was appointed Lithuanian Consul General in New York. In the 1950s he held official and unofficial positions on *Galaxy Magazine* and Gnome Press. His masterwork was/is *Rogue Moon.* He spent his final few decades in Evanston, Chicago's closest suburb, where he produced *Who?* and *Michaelmas*, and was instrumental in creating and publicizing Writers of the Future. He was Worldcon Guest of Honor in 1997.

Gene Wolfe was living in the Dayton area when I moved from Chicago to Cincinnati in 1976. He promptly moved to the Chicago suburbs. (It's okay, Gene; I forgive you.) His masterwork is the 4-volume *Book of the Long Son,* but most of what he writes gets enormous critical praise. He was the Worldcon's Guest of Honor in 1985.

In the mid-1960s there was an informal Chicago Writers Group. One of the members was George R. R. Martin. Ever hear of him? George probably outsells Stephen King and James Patterson combined these days. The local luxury casino in Cincinnati even has a wildly-impressive Game of Thrones slot/gambling machine. But along with being a zillionaire, George is the winner of 4 Hugos, back when he was just a normal human being, and was the Guest of Honor at the 2003 Worldcon.

Another member of that group was Phyllis Eisenstein, who's still in Chicago and still writing. At last count she's the author of 6 books and 40+ stories, and is a multiple Hugo nominee.

Still another member was Tom Easton. Tom was the reviewer for *Analog* for what seems like forever, but probably wasn't much more than 25 or 30 years. He's the author of six books and 50+ stories, and the editor of six anthologies.

I was also a member of the Chicago Writers Group. My current totals: 77 novels, 284 stories, 3 screenplays, edited 42 anthologies, currently editing Stellar Guild books and *Galaxy's Edge* Magazine, 5 Hugos (from a record 37 nominations), and Guest of Honor at the 2012 Worldcon.

Then there's Bill Fawcett and Jody Lynn Nye, a married couple that's been active in every nook and cranny of the field. Bill began in gaming, where he developed some games and co-owned Mayfair games. He had edited and/or packaged well over 100 books. Jody Lynn has written or co-authored more than 40 books (her collaborators include Anne McCaffrey, Piers Anthony, and Bob Asprin) and 100 stories, and

she is also an anthology editor.

Carol and I left the Chicago area in 1976, moving to Cincinnati, but the area keeps producing science fiction writers. The most recent include Nebula winner Richard Chwedyk, Campbell winner Wesley Chu, and Hugo, Campbell, and Nebula winner Mary Robinette Kowal.

And there's one more I want to bring to your attention: my friend Steven Silver, who has a little something to do with the fanzine you're reading, and is not just a superfan, but a pro as well. He's edited a half dozen anthologies and collections, sold fiction professionally, created the Sidewise Award, has been on multiple Nebula Award juries, and from 2004 through 2012 he was the editor/publisher of ISFIC Press.

I'm sure we'll be hearing from and about all the names I missed, but even this selection is something a city that is not the center of the publishing industry can be proud of.

Expanding Your Program Participant Base
by Steven H Silver

When if comes time to figure out program participants, the first ones on the list for any given year are the con's guests of honor. Not only should the programming chair use these people on panels, but panels should be designed with their work (written, artist, film, or other) in mind. Even better is to find out their interests and program accordingly. Most people can be used in ways not obvious if you only look at what they are best known for.

Does your author guest of honor paint? Sing? Work as an active scientist, folklorist, photographer? Find out and use them in those areas. It will make the con more interesting for the guest and introduce their fans to a different, more human, aspect of them. Hal Clement, for instance, could speak about his novels, teaching science in the classroom, or his experience in World War II. If Programming needed it, Hal could present his "George Richard" persona as an artist and discuss his painting and illustrations. Most guests, no matter how they are billed, have the ability to be a sort of Renaissance guest, but in many cases, the title pasted on them…Author…Artist….Media…blinds and limits the Programming team from using them as effectively and as innovatively as possible.

Following the guests of honor, there are guests and special guests, local fans, authors, artists, etc. who can be relied upon, and other individuals who contact Programming (or through the office of guest liaison). As the Programming staff gets to know these individuals on a more personal basis following several years of attendance, the staff should have a better idea of each of their strengths and weaknesses, as well as their varied interests to use them to expand the program and fill in gaps as needed.

However, there are abundant sources for additional program participants out there: people who can be contacted who might not otherwise come to the convention, but can add a great deal of value to the program, often for the simple price of a comped day membership.

I've brought in specialist panelists from the local newspapers. After noticing one of the local paper's

television reviewers give several good reviews of SF television shows, I dropped her an e-mail asking her to attend. She (and her husband) did and had a great time and hope to come back. Looking through the paper, there are other possibilities as well: the cultural critic, film critics, the book review editor (although our local book review editor detests SF and won't review it, which makes me want to bring her to a con even more).

Radio personalities are also a possibility. In Chicago, Peter Sagal, of "Wait, Wait, Don't Tell Me" is an avowed science fiction fan. We won't know if he'll come to a con until we ask him. Another NPR commentator, Aaron Freeman, did come to a Windycon several years ago. A couple months later, I got a call from him and he read one of his commentaries, about the con to me about a week before it was broadcast on NPR.

Museums, especially, but not limited to, science museums, are also a good place to look. Scientists can come to talk about their specialties, curators about preservation techniques, if you have an art museum see if there is any reasonable tie (again, many pulp SF artists actually studied at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago). Contact their community outreach departments to see who is available.

Universities have a plethora of specialists, many of whom will be willing to come out and talk about their areas of specialty, whether it be science, history, philosophy, art…Check their credentials. A few years ago, I noticed a philosopher from a university about three hours away had written an article about Firefly. We had him at the con.

Numerous fans work in the technology industry and know people at their offices or companies who are doing research that could possibly be shared. Reach out to them. Not only might they be willing to come and talk, but, given the type of work they do, they might easily be able to make the transition to fan.

Many cities have other, more miscellaneous organizations, that could offer good panelists. In most large cities, you'll be able to find someone (or sometimes, multiple someones) who offer tours of the haunted spots in the city. They can't really give a tour during the con, but they can tell stories and distribute literature about their offerings.

About three months before the convention, send an email, call, or send a letter to the individuals you want to invite. Remember, they most likely aren't part of the con-attending community and will have preconceptions about what to expect. Explain a little about your con. Tell them why you think they would be a good addition, including specific program items you would like to put them on, or topics you would like them to speak about. Let them know what you are willing to offer…a one day membership for them, for them and a guest, the whole weekend?

If you don't get a response, follow up, but don't make a pest of yourself. If they don't respond after a second invitation, give it up and possibly try again the following year.

And if they do accept, treat them as a guest of honor from Programming's point of view. Let them know expectations, where to pick up badges, materials, etc. Keep in touch with them and let them know what their schedule is. Don't schedule them for anything without their approval. And contact them about a week before the event with a reminder, their schedule, and to ask if there is anything else they need.

With luck, they'll not only add a new dimension to the convention, but will enjoy themselves so much that they'll come back on their own dime and can be inserted into the regular programming participant pool.

Great Expectations: Panelists Read & Discuss Favorite Story Openings

Nancy Kress

Great Expectations: Panelists Read & Discuss Favorite Story Openings
What makes an opening good? What should it cover? How long should it be? What does it tell the reader about the rest of the story? Can an opening be a cheat?
Steven H Silver (M), James Patrick Kelly, James Van Pelt
Panel held at Denvention 3, August 17, 2008

An effective opening has one mission: capture readers' attention so they will keep reading. It doesn't have to be clear, it doesn't have to be eloquent, it doesn't even have to be grammatical. But it must intrigue the reader enough so that he or she will go on to the next paragraph or scene or chapter. If it doesn't do that, you might as well not write the rest of the story. Just lounge around in bed, eat chocolates, and watch Game of Thrones on DVD.

Over the decades, I've asked a lot of editors how long a writer has to capture attention before the editor stops reading and rejects the story. They might, of course, finish the whole thing and still reject it. But that initial impression of "Okay, I'll read on"—how long does a writer have to create that?

All the short-form editors said the same thing: three paragraphs.

All the novel editors said the same thing: a few pages.

You don't get much time.

So what creates that interest? A lot depends on the editor, of course. Editors are just people (insert wild guffaw here), and people's tastes differ. But mostly, what a good opening does is promise conflict. You don't have to have a body hurling past a sixth-story window (although Steven Gould did in "Peaches for Mad Molly"), but we want assurances that your story is going to have conflict and tension, usually from someone trying to accomplish something. So, as a general rule, I try to have my openings:

- Get somebody on stage doing something. This means not opening with a history of the kingdom, or a happy family eating dinner and bantering, or explanations of a family tree (forget that Jane Austen did this in Sense and Sensibility: the novel form was newer then, the book wasn't SF, and anyway she was Jane Austen). The "doing something" doesn't have to be hugely dramatic. Connie Willis opened her multiple-award-winning "At the Rialto" with a person having a hard time checking into a hotel.
- Some stated or implied reason why the character wants to do this. This often brings in, or at least hints at, a backstory.
- Some stated or implied reason why this effort is difficult.
- Enough details so that I, the reader, can feel I am observing this scene, not just being told about it.

Here is an opening that works: the first paragraph of Nnedi Okorafor's Hugo-winning novella Binti:

I powered up the transporter and said a silent prayer. I had no idea what I was going to do if it didn't work. My transporter was cheap, so even a droplet of moisture or, more likely, a grain of sand, would cause it to short. It was faulty and most of the time I had to start it over and over before it worked.

Please not now, please not now, I thought.

The transporter shivered in the sand and I held my breath. Tiny, flat, and black as a prayer stone, it buzzed softly and then slowly rose from the sand. Finally, it produced the baggage-lifting force. I grinned. Now I could make it to the shuttle.

Why does this opening work? Look at all that we learn in three paragraphs:

- The character isn't rich (or her transporter wouldn't be "cheap" and "faulty")
- She wants desperately to go wherever she's trying to go (the italicized, intense prayer for the transporter to work.)
- This is the future (we don't have tiny, baggage-lifting, anti-gravity transporters—although as someone who travels often, I wish we did.)
- Wherever she is, there's a lot of sand.

Most important, however, is what we haven't yet learned—where is her shuttle taking her? Why is she struggling with this alone instead of being seen off by family or friends? Why does this matter so much to her? All these questions have been raised by three paragraphs, and to learn the answer, we read on. The rest of the first scene delivers some answers, and raises more questions.

And that is the real secret to an effective opening: Raise dramatic questions that the reader is curious to have answered. This is why an opening doesn't have to be clear, with a lot of explanation. If we're curious, we'll read on to learn the answers.

Another example: the first paragraph of Hugh Howey's very successful omnibus novel, Wool:

The children were playing while Holston climbed to his death; he could hear them squealing as only happy children do. While they thundered about frantically above, Holston took his time, each step methodical and ponderous, as he wound his way around and around the spiral staircase, old boots ringing out on metal treads.

Only a single paragraph, and yet we're hooked (I was, anyway). The happy children and a man going to his death create a sharp and poignant contrast, but that alone wouldn't have caught me. What I want to know is why is this man, who is at least healthy enough to climb what seems to be a long spiral staircase, going to die? Is it suicide or will someone at the top of the stairs kill him? Why? How?

These openings both rely on strong sensory details to ground us. Sometimes, however, an opening can be even more obscure. Here is the opening to John Varley's classic story "Air Raid:"

I was jerked awake by the silent alarm vibrating in my skull. It won't shut down until you sit up, so I did. All around me in the dark bunkroom the Snatch Team members were sleeping singly and in pairs. I yawned, scratched my ribs, and patted Gene's hairy flanks. He turned over. So much for a romantic send-off.

Rubbing sleep from my eyes, I reached to the floor for my leg, strapped it on and plugged it in. Then I was running down the row of bunks toward Ops.

The situation board glowed in the gloom. Sun-Belt Airlines Flight 128, Miami to New York, September 15, 1979. We'd been looking for that one for three years. I should have been happy, but who can afford it when you wake up?

Huh? I don't understand much of this: What is a Snatch Team? What is "Ops" operating about? Why have they been looking for this flight and what will they do to/for/about it? What happened to the character's leg that it needs to be "strapped on"? But it doesn't matter that I don't understand, but now I'm interested enough to read on for answers.

However, a caveat here—a BIG caveat—answers must be forthcoming eventually, and the answers need to be as interesting as the questions. Otherwise, the opening is a cheat. But this panel isn't about stories as wholes, just their openings.

So—intrigue me.

To Track or Not to Track
by Jim and Laurie Mann

The question of Program "tracks" is one of the two great convention Program religious arguments (another being whether questionnaires should just list general areas of interest or should include a list of program items to express interest in). On one side, there is the fundamentalist track position: Program is designed by a group of track managers, each of whom is completely responsible for their tracks (science, literary, movies, gaming, filk, whatever). The managers are free to invite who they want, assign participants to items in their tracks, and in all ways manage their tracks. On the other side, there are those that don't believe in track: Program is put together by a small team, who handle all areas of the program.

But like all great religious schisms, the Program track divide has more than two positions. There are a number of positions between the two extremes, and in our years of working on program -- at conventions ranging from small local conventions through Worldcons -- we have always opted for a middle ground, that avoids the pitfalls of either extreme. For small conventions this approach is pretty close to the "no track" position; for larger conventions, it's closer to the middle.

While the "fundamentalist track" scheme has some good points -- experts "own" the tracks can, give them focus and create items, it has a number of failings. It can be confusing to participants, as people who can be used by multiple areas. For example, Greg Benford is a writer, a physicist, and a fan. He can then get invitations from multiple areas. And since each track is, at least initially, scheduled independently, it can result in scheduling conflicts that need to be sorted out late in the game. Finally, it can make the creation of cross-area items more difficult. Who handles an item that discusses filk, anime, and hard SF? Convention program should be an integrated whole, not a cluster of individual silos.

When we've managed Program for large cons like Worldcon, we prefer a team approach, with area leads and lists of about how many topics we'd like in various areas. We prefer the term "area" rather than "track" so as not to have this associated with the fundamentalist track approach. Area leads have a focus on their areas: science, literary, etc. They are responsible for coming up with ideas for items within their areas, suggesting good participants, and so on. But they are part of the overall Program team, and it's the team as a whole that's responsible for Program as a whole. Area leads can also help create items in other areas. They help in the overall schedule. They contribute to the design of the questionnaire. But area leads are leads, not owners. Ownership belongs to the team. All invitations and all scheduling are handled by the team, so that Program speaks with one voice. Participants hear from Program, not from an area lead.

Yes, there are always exceptions - Children's Program, Filk, Art/Costume and often Science tend to

be a little more silo-like. The Science area lead contacts scientists who are outside the field. Though they still make sure first that the team agrees that those scientists are ones we want on our invitation list. But if it turns out a local scientist dabbles in astronomical art, an integrated program could more easily add her to an Art-related item than a track-manager could.

Another problem with strict tracks is sometimes items are kept in the same room throughout the convention. But not all Media items are going to attract 500 people; some will only attract 60. Program needs to flexibility to put a popular Science item in a large room, and a less popular item in a small room.

There are times when a type of Program needs a special layout or location. Children's Program tends to be set-up differently from other areas, needs to be closer to bathrooms and needs a little more security and a little more staffing than most Program areas. Children's Program really can't shift out of its room. Concerts need special sound equipment and staging. At larger conventions, it's helpful to have some "messy" rooms with plastic on the floor for Art, Costume, Make-up Workshops and Science Demos. Some rooms need data projectors and a screen for Presentations, something most SF cons can't afford for every room. But sometimes a Presentation room is for a Science item, sometimes for an Art item and sometimes for something completely different like a History item.

From experience, using a team approach to creating Program results in a Program that's not only interesting, but has more items that cross areas. Moreover, from a Program team perspective, it reduces the amount of last-minute scheduling tweaks, as the whole team has been focused on the whole schedule throughout the Program creation process.

Time Travel: Can You Really Get a Second Chance?
by Michael Burstein

Time Travel, Can You Really Get a Second Chance? How would fixing past mistakes change things today? Would people learn from their mistakes if they were fixed before they happen or is it just delaying the inevitable?
Steven H Silver
Panel held at Duckon 19, June 20, 2010. Additional panelists names not recorded.

The literature of science fiction is filled with time travel stories, and sometimes it seems as if every story reinvents the rules of time travel. Given the improbability that time travel could actually happen, most readers are willing to accept the different rules that are presented in the various stories. The most important thing is for any fictional presentation of time travel to be consistent; in other words, once the rules of time travel are explained, the rest of the story should not violate those rules or else the reader would consider it cheating. This idea of consistency also extends to time travel presented in books, TV shows, and movies as well as short stories. If, for example, a story opens with a time traveler changing their personal history such that they come back to a changed future in which they retain their memories of the previous timeline, it wouldn't make sense for a second trip to the past to cause the time traveler to forget everything.

So in order to answer the question posed, one has to start with an understanding of how time travel will work to make such a question sensible.

Let's assume that time travel functions in a way that actually does allow you to change the past. For our purposes, it doesn't matter if changing the past in fact alters the one true timeline or sends our time traveler into a parallel universe. As far as the time traveler is concerned, the final result is the same. Either the traveler returns to a new timeline or the traveler skips into an alternate world where the change they implemented is a part of the new history.

(As an aside, there are stories in which a time traveler can visit the past, either in person or as an unseen observer, and not make any changes. In some of these stories, the traveler only observes; in others, the traveler can interact and might think they are making changes, only to discover in their end that their actions were already part of the timeline. Star Trek refers to this as a "predestination paradox," but the idea has been discussed elsewhere.)

Let's also assume that our time traveler maintains their memories of their personal past, as

noted above as a possibility. If we were to posit the other scenario, then the time traveler wouldn't have the opportunity to learn from their mistakes. Instead, they would simply forget each old timeline as a new one is created. Now, that might lead the time traveler to keep trying to fix the past anyway, but it would avoid the interesting question of whether or not the time traveler learned from their mistakes. If a time traveler completely forgets the details of a previous timeline, they may very well keep going back in time to change an event over and over, but from their perspective they would always be trying to change the event for the first time.

We also need to deal with the question, perhaps, of whether or not the time traveler would now have two sets of memories, one from the original timeline (let's call it Timeline Aleph) and one from the new timeline (Timeline Bet). For our purposes, however, the question can be considered irrelevant, as long as we assume that the time traveler can easily learn the historical details of the new timeline. Here we are concerned about correcting mistakes, and as long as the time traveler has a way to compare Timelines Aleph and Bet, we're all set.

Now that we've established a set of rules for time travel, we can finally begin to address the questions. The first question is: How would fixing past mistakes change things today? This is a rather open-ended question and is probably simply meant as a lead-in for the main discussion. That said, there is an important point to be made from this question. One usually assumes that fixing past mistakes would change the present for the better. But we must also assume the possibility that changing past mistakes could also make things worse. If that wasn't a possibility, then the question of whether or not a time traveler should attempt to change the past would no longer be a question. It would be a certainty, because any change by definition would make the present better.

So let's answer the question by adding the assumption that is usually implied: a time traveler can change history for the better, but a time traveler can also, presumably inadvertently, change history for the worse. (The classic example of the latter case is Eckels, the protagonist of Ray Bradbury's 1952 story "A Sound of Thunder," which has reminded me all my life not to step on butterflies.)

We are now ready to address the second question, the heart of the discussion: Would people (meaning time travelers) learn from their mistakes if they were fixed before they happen, or is doing so just delaying the inevitable?

To properly address this question, we need to unpack it. We need to examine human personality as well as time travel, because the question asks not just about time travel but about what people learn from their mistakes.

If a time traveler were to change their personal history but still retain a memory of their original timeline, they would know what mistakes they had made once before and presumably would try to learn from them. That implies that not only would they change their mistakes in the past, but once they returned to the present they would do their best to avoid making similar mistakes as they lived out the rest of their life.

However, changing one's inherent personality might be very difficult for some people. I'm not a psychologist, but I know from personal experience that it can be hard to change one's regular habits. My guess is that fixing a mistake using time travel will not be enough for most people. Using time travel to fix a mistake might work the first time, but if the traveler falls back into their old behavior, they will probably make the same mistake, or similar ones, once they get back to the present.

So, what happens next? Well, if the time traveler still has access to a time machine, the solution appears to be obvious. Go back in time to the new mistake, and then fix that one. And, one hopes, learn from that second mistake not to make a third mistake.

At this point, we could possibly assume that the time traveler has actually learned from their mistake and that they are not simply delaying the inevitable. If they don't make the initial mistake ever again, then they are done fixing the timeline.

Except for one thing.

In my opinion, the question of whether or not a time traveler would be delaying the inevitable is intimately connected to a different question, to wit: When does a time traveler know that they are done fixing the timeline?

Let's leave behind the idea of a personal mistake for a moment and instead ponder one of the classic time travel scenarios, such as saving Abraham Lincoln or John F. Kennedy, or killing Adolf Hitler.

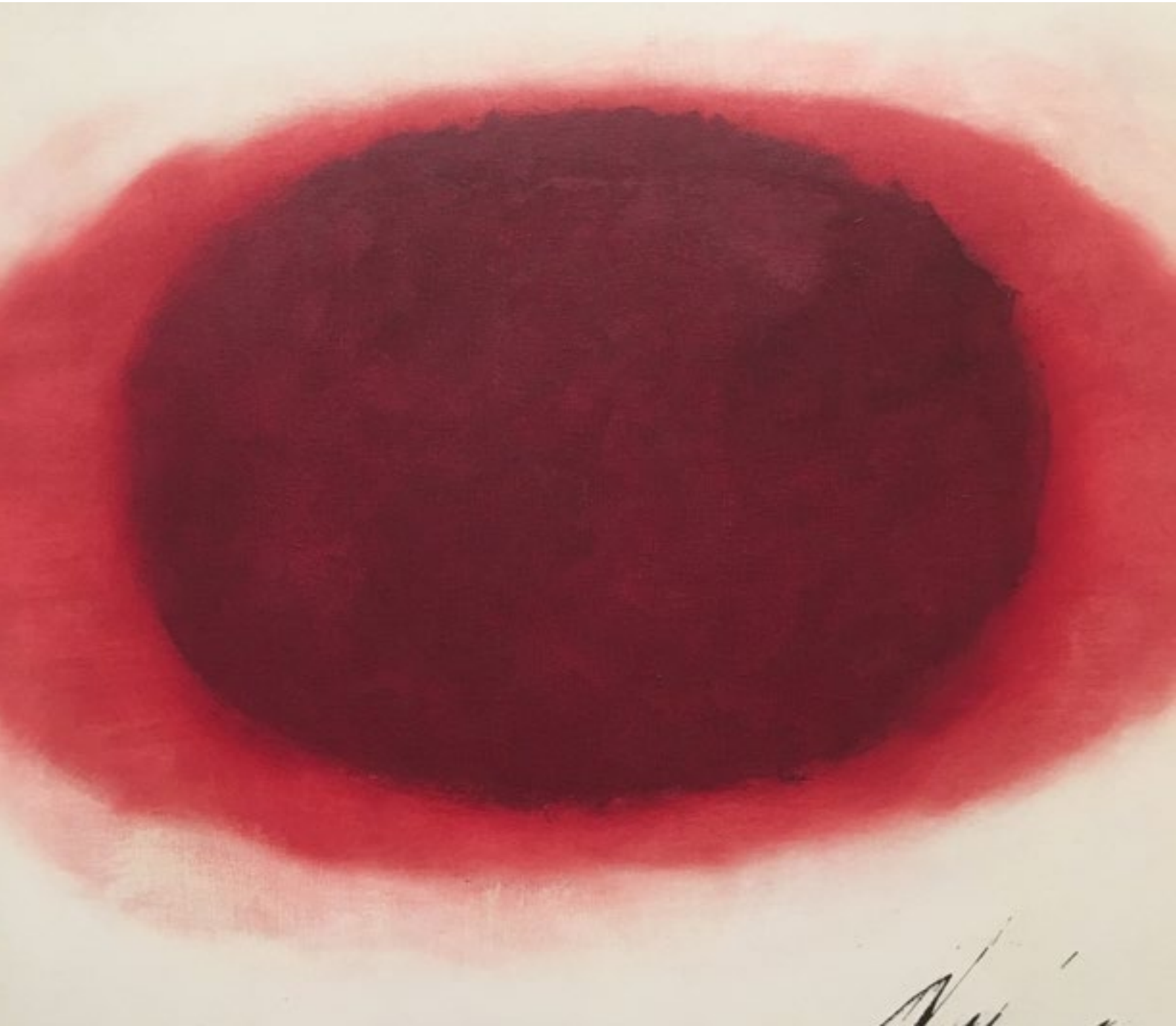
Suppose a time traveler decides that the world would be better off had Hitler died before he had a chance to rise to power. So the time traveler goes back in time, kills Hitler, and returns to the present. Everything's now better, right?

Well...perhaps.

We don't really know what any one change in history might do. As noted above, a time traveler could make things worse. Yes, even killing Hitler could lead to a worse world, and although I have to admit that I'd be hard pressed to see how, I'm sure someone could spin out a scenario where killing Hitler leads to atomic oblivion for the human race. The time traveler would have to go back again, and either unkill Hitler, or change something else that now happened because of the earlier death of Hitler.

And then what? Presumably, the new timelines created still have wars, famines, diseases, and death. How do you know when you're done "fixing" the timeline? Even if you finally create a utopian present, what guarantee do you have that the utopia will continue unimpeded into the future? Even if you could travel into the future to check, how far do you have to travel to make sure the utopia will absolutely, positively, never revert back into something worse?

The power to change history is akin to playing a meddling god, and not a god who can be absolutely sure of the outcomes of their actions. In the end, it's not possible for a time traveler ever to know definitively that their changes have finally resulted in the so-called best of all possible worlds. A time traveler who is obsessed with fixing past mistakes, whether personal or historical, would be forced to tinker with the timeline forever.



I Dream of Post-Its: Musings on Programming
By Helen Montgomery

Programming is a crucial job for any convention. It is the area generally most noticed by attendees. It requires creativity, writing skills, scheduling skills, a knowledge of program participants – or it requires the ability to put together a team who can help with all those things.

I was first involved with Programming for Capricon 29 and 30 as the Chair. I then ran Programming for Capricon 31 – Escape! We had some great guests that year, including John Scalzi and John Picacio, so that made my job considerably easier. I also ran Programming for Capricon 35: R&R, and was Programming Second for Capricon 36: Once Upon A Capricon.

Over the years Capricon has developed the Programming Brain Trust, and I've been a part of that for some time now. Having a brain trust of people has allowed us to bring in new people to run Programming, developing new talent and ideas while having their back and ensuring the expectations for Programming are met. Our Brain Trust has included the current Con Chair, past heads of Programming, our Art Show Director, Community Outreach Liaison, and Area Heads for Gaming, Anime, and Special Events. We have also tried to coordinate with whomever is heading up Children's Programming. In addition, we have held Brainstorming Sessions with the concom, and opened up for suggestion from attendees and program participants. Since Capricons are themed, we would periodically find people who had special interest in the theme to participate in the Brain Trust for that year.

Personally, I like and recommend this structure. No one is going to have the knowledge base to do a program entirely on their own. I would have a great deal of difficulty coming up with programming related to space exploration or publishing, but both are areas of great interest to convention attendees. I also, despite appearances to the contrary, don't actually know everyone who registers as a Program Participant. (I know a lot more of them now, but still not all!).

Over the years we developed a Program Participant Survey so we could find out what are participants were interested in, adding in requests for information about their day jobs, bios, etc. The more information you have about your participants, the better program you will have. The survey evolved over time to get more information as we determined what would be useful.

We are currently in the process of switching over to Zambia for our scheduling, after years of using ConCentric, developed for us by Leane Verhulst. It suited our needs for a long time, but we liked some of the options Zambia gave us. One of these is that partipants have the ability to go into Zambia and request to be on specific program items. In the past we had the items, and assigned people based on our knowledge of their expertise and interests. Often we matched people and panels well, but sometimes there were glaring errors. Our hope is that using Zambia will reduce those potential mismatches.

One of the other things Zambia does is allow you to schedule in the program itself, dragging and dropping items into program slots, where it will check for double scheduling of panelists and other problems. Automation – the way of the future!

Which brings me to the Post-Its.

When I have done programming, we created grids on posterboards for each day of the convention, with rooms on one axis and time slots on the other. Each space was, conveniently enough, the size of a square Post-It Note. Many colors of Post-Its were purchased – one color for programming panels, another for Special

Events. Pink meant the room wasn't available in the time slot. Orange was for Readings or Autographing Sessions. We also had Post-It Flags for noting tech needs, Guest of Honor items, and other things. We would write the name of the panel at the top of the Post-It (or if we were really on top of things, print labels of the titles and stick them on), and then start penciling in possible participants. From there, we started putting them into time slots, checking availability of participants, and gradually creating a schedule. This process was called the Programming Frenzy, and involved lots of people in the room together, throwing out ideas and suggestions, laughing, and eating tasty snacks. It was truly a bonding experience.

Post-Its are awesome. That's my story and I'm sticking to it.

In using Zambia, the theory is we won't need this system of posterboard and Post-Its. This is a great theory, and I hope it works out well.

For me, having used Zambia a bit with Detcon 1 in 2014 and NorthAmeriCon' 17, I noticed something. I do better when I can see the big picture. The ability to have the posterboards up on a wall, looking at each day next to each other, was immensely helpful to me. I remember when working on Capricon 31, someone at the Programming Frenzy said it was amazing to watch me standing there with a Post-It sticking to me fingers, staring a posterboard, then reaching out with another hand to move one Post-It note, making just the right space in the schedule for the one in my hand.

I would put these posterboards on my kitchen wall and stare at them as I finalized the details of the schedule after the frenzy. I did, in fact, start dreaming of Post-Its. I liked it – they were colorful and well-organized dreams!

I also missed the in-person Programming Frenzy sessions. There's a camaraderie that develops there – you get to know people better and build a closer team. You get to laugh a lot, and have people there to back you up when you get frustrated. You will have that one person who can find just the right spot for that Post-It note.

Brain Trusts. Databases. Post-Its.

Here's my point – you need lots of tools in your toolbox to head up Programming. Sometimes you need people, such as the Brain Trust. Talk to past Programming Heads and get the scoop on the people – what are their strengths and weaknesses? How were they most helpful? Sometimes you have a program your convention uses, and you need to as well, like ConCentric and Zambia. Find out from past Programming Heads what they liked and didn't like about those programs. What worked? What failed? Play with the program and see what you think. What works for you? What's missing for you?

Don't be afraid to pull in other tools to help you. Maybe you want to bring in new people for your Brain Trust. Maybe you want to schedule an in-person Frenzy, even if you're using something like Zambia. Some people like using spreadsheets. Some people, like me, like using Post-Its. There isn't One True Way. Find what works for you – whatever combination of tools that is - and embrace it. Ultimately, you want a program that attendees will enjoy. You want a program where attendees complain that there were too many things to attend. How you get there is up to you – do what works for you and makes it an enjoyable, successful process.

Mixed Marriages by Terra LeMay

Mixed Marriages
One's a fan, one isn't. How do couples handle the demands of fandom when one of the pair isn't really interested? Panel members have received permission from their spouses to be at this Worldcon.
Michael Benveniste (M), Bob Devney, Daniel Kimmel, Steven H Silver
Panel held at Noreascon IV, September 5, 2004

What do you do with a spouse who doesn't enjoy fandom? There's no right answer that will work for everyone, but here are a few strategies that might help you if you're in that position.

For conventions:

Strategy #001: Consider leaving your spouse at home. If they're not going to enjoy a Worldcon, then why insist they attend?

In 2012, I attended my first Worldcon, along with my close friend Beth Dawkins. We left our spouses at home in Georgia and made a road trip out of it, after promising we'd drive carefully and stick together (for safety, of course). We both had an amazing (dare I say, life-changing?) experience, and I've been attending when I can ever since. Since my spouse has no interest in attending a Worldcon, this means I've had to consider strategies for how to work this out while keeping my spouse happy.

Strategy #002: Communication is key.

Above all, communicate. During that first Worldcon and every one since, I kept in touch with my spouse so he wouldn't worry. I texted him *en route*, while Beth was driving, and called him when we stopped for gas. And again, when we arrived and checked in. I texted him when we picked up our badges, and again when we rode up the elevator with George R.R. Martin the first time. I sent him the link to the livestream of the Hugo Awards so he could watch while I did from inside the ballroom. (He didn't, but he was still happy to hear from me.) And I called him, afterward, when I got back to my room, even though it was nearly 3am. (Again, he was happy to hear from me.)

Strategy #003: Bring them along, and help them find programming that they'll enjoy.

Prior to the 2012 Worldcon, I had dragged my spouse to DragonCon a couple of times. (DragonCon is in Atlanta and local to us). It was novel for him, for a few hours. DragonCon is large and diverse, with over fifty tracks of programming, and despite his overall disinterest in science fiction conventions, he was able to find discussion panels tackling some subjects he found interesting. This is easier with a convention the size of DragonCon than it might be with a smaller, more tightly focused convention. Even so, the crowds and atmosphere eventually became tiresome for him. Since we were at a local convention, I could drive us home, which allowed us to employ the next strategy.

Strategy #004: Most science fiction conventions are held in or near a major hotel with a bar. If your spouse drinks, drop them off at the bar.

Clearly, this strategy is of limited utility. Not everyone drinks alcohol, and even those who do have their limits. Fortunately, there are often other options besides bars, for bored and idle spouses.

Strategy #005: Look for local tourist destinations, and send your spouse on a day trip.

I have not yet dragged my spouse along to a Worldcon, but it's inevitably going to happen one day. Knowing that, I'm incredibly grateful to the fact that most Worldcons make a point of providing suggestions for local tourist destinations. In Chicago, there were walking tours of the city. In San Antonio in 2013, there was the Alamo. In Kansas City in 2016, there were some trips to local museums. (There were probably other opportunities too, that I'm unaware of, but I was spending my own time at the convention, and I was employing Strategy #001 for those trips.)

Strategy #006: Have you considered bribery?

Again, a feature of many conventions is that they occur in or near major hotels. Which often provide luxury services such as spa treatments or massages. And even smaller hotels usually offer in-room cable television and room service. Budget for this, and leave your spouse in the room to enjoy a quiet day in bed while watching pay-per-view movies.

Strategy #007: Bribery again.

Conventions are time consuming and can be expensive. Fair's fair, and maybe there's some equally time-consuming or expensive trip your partner would like to take. Encourage them to go! They'll likely feel more content with your next Worldcon trip if you do.

Strategy #008: Equitable treatment?

Okay, this is just a life skill you should already be practicing, but next time you're along with your spouse at some event you find horribly boring but they enjoy, consider how you accommodate their enthusiasm? My spouse is a football fan. Sometimes he gets very excited in explaining the plays or the history or the scores, and I make an effort to follow what he's saying, even though it doesn't interest me. He does the same for me, when I spend half an evening raving about the Hugo ballot. He has never heard of most of the titles on a Hugo ballot and has no understanding of what it means to vote for "No Award" in a category, but he respects that I care about these things and listens when I want to talk about it. I can cheer for football with him—"Go football!"—even without understanding it, and he can cheer for my Hugo picks—"Go Hugos!"—even without reading them or watching them.

Strategy #009: Leave them home.

I know I said this one already, but it bears repeating. You can share your love of fandom with other fans! You don't have to inflict it on your spouse if they don't enjoy it. Really! When you're together, enjoy the things you both share—together. Presumably there are a fair number of these. The rest you can handle on your own, when you're apart.

Strategy #010: Communication again.

Be sure they know how you feel about fandom. Although my spouse couldn't give a fig about who wins the Hugo Award for Best Novel, he loves me—and because he loves me, he wants me to be happy. Look for that kind of support from your own partner or significant other, and don't forget to give it back, as well. ("Go football!")

This issue doesn't have to be a dealbreaker for a relationship. But if all else fails, you could always speak to a good divorce attorney. I haven't checked into it, myself, but I've heard that some conventions have mixer parties for eligible singles! No, I'm kidding! Mostly. I mean, I think those exist. But seriously, did I mention bribery? I usually bring back a small gift or travel memento for my spouse, and that helps my spouse know that I was thinking of him while I was gone, which goes a long way toward showing that I really *do* care as much about him as I do Ann Leckie's most recent novel.

Sharing Your Love With Family
by Kate Baker

Sharing Your Love with Family

If you're anything like me, your parents don't quite understand why you love this "Buck Rogers" stuff or want to go see all those CGI-heavy movies. Come and learn how to explain your passion for science fiction, fantasy, and fandom, to the mundane family that bore you.

Toni Bogolub, Richard Chwedyk, Beverly Friend, Steven H Silver
Panel held at Windycon 34, November 11, 2007

I tend to shy away from openings that begin with "When I was young..." but unfortunately, that is exactly what I need to do with this discussion. My father, a nuclear engineer who worked for a power company, wasn't home very much when I was a kid. When he was, I got up early before he drove off in the wee hours of the morning, and together while I ate breakfast and he drank his coffee, we'd watch all the stuff he'd missed when he was on the road.

We didn't have a DVR back, oh, mumbles incoherently years ago, but we did have a used VCR that sometimes ate the cassettes. We'd rent movies and I'd make sure to record shows in his absences. Sometimes I'd really mess up, and tape over something he hadn't watched yet, such was the peril of that type of equipment. Our favorites included Alien (I was a very mature seven year old, despite my mother's anger that I was too young for such horrors), Star Wars, Superman, Blade Runner, E.T. the Extra Terrestrial, Tron, The Ice Pirates, The Last Starfighter, The Worst Witch, The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8th Dimension, Amazing Stories, Star Trek: The Next Generation, re-runs of the Twilight Zone and all the other wonderful titles that escaped the eighties and nineties. Space Camp, The Cat from Outer Space, and Flight of the Navigator were the movies that made me look up to the heavens and subsequently write down the word, 'astronaut' on every

"What do you want to be when you grow up?" paper during grade school.

When I got older, that time with him whittled away as his responsibilities changed. Middle school, high school, and hormones presented new challenges of my own. However, my love for science fiction and fantasy was both instilled waiting for the sun to rise those mornings and grew along with me. I gravitated toward those genres in all forms—from comic books, to novels, adding to the growing list of movies and TV shows that I had watched alongside my father. Twin Peaks captured my attention in seventh grade. So much so, I still have the signed photograph that the Kyle MacLachlan fan club sent my way for a few dollars. (I didn't eat lunch for two weeks to get that one.) The heroes and villains of DC Comics also followed me through high school. I still get side-eye from friends when I say that Michael Keaton will always be my Batman. Don't even get me started on my loves of Roger Moore as 007 or Matt Smith as Doctor Who. I know. I know.

Thanks, dad.

When it comes to my own children and even the rest of my family, I think I have an advantage when it comes to passing on the classics and experiencing the new stories now flowing from some of the beloved franchises. It wasn't very cool to be a nerd or a geek when I was growing up (see above about Michael Keaton and Roger Moore). But it seems that through our own defiance, persistence, and the mainstreaming of the genres to a wider audience, it's more acceptable to shout your love of Harry Potter, Star Wars, Anime, etc. in the hallowed halls of high school. Game of Thrones watching parties are popular, and Marvel and DC are locked in a battle for your money and still managing to bring in millions in revenue.

It's acceptable to be a nerd or a geek and even seen as cool in wider circles that didn't exist when I was younger. Just the other day I was boarding a plane and next to one of the gates, the crew of Southwest Airlines had hung Halloween decorations that said "Hold the Door" in the iconic Game of Thrones lettering we've seen from the HBO show. I watched as people passed, and while the occasional passenger cocked their head in confusion, there were more chuckles than incomprehension.

This stuff is everywhere now. I've seen companion cube shirts from the science fiction game Portal while on vacation. I've seen more Marvel, DC, anime, and Star Wars shirts out in the wild. Deadpool and Adventure Time apparel still seems to be rather popular in my small town for some reason. I can't tell you how many little ones came dressed as their favorite SFF character each Halloween. Although, I'm idly wondering if anyone can beat the twelve Elsa costumes that came to my door last year. Extended family discussions now include, "Did you see that latest episode of Outlander?" "The Expanse is so friggen cool!" "Stranger Things is my favorite binge right now."

For me, it's been even easier to share this passion because of my jobs in the community. I am the Executive Director of the (deep breath) Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America (SFWA) and I work for Clarkesworld Magazine as a narrator, podcast director, and the non-fiction editor. While these are most certainly all shameless plugs, they do serve a secondary purpose. My kids are naturally curious about what I do for a living, just like I was with my mom and dad. I gave a presentation about Eddy-current to my perplexed third grade teacher because my father had invented a diagnostic robot for his nuclear power plant. He spent the time showing me when I expressed interest and encouraged me. I do the same for my kids.

It just so happens that it is because I'm doing something I love, which is directly related to my passions for the genres and surrounding community, that it is that much easier to share all of that with my family. That natural curiosity, paired with exciting opportunities to meet the writers and professionals in the field on some occasions, and to perhaps bring back new works that I receive or buy at conventions, fuels their own interest.

I've never once made them do or watch or read anything. They've wanted to tag along to conventions and volunteered and sat with me as I read or watched a new episode of Doctor Who or played an SF-inspired video game. We are all happily destroying Vex and Cabal in Destiny 2 now, engrossed by the single player story and the camaraderie and frustration that comes from being a part of a fire team. My oldest saw how much I loved Portal and the Mass Effect franchise and is now exploring them on her own. My youngest has a great love for science and wanted to watch Andy Weir's, The Martian. We did. I watched her as both joy, skepticism, and tears as the story enfolded, and I hope she can use some of what she learned in future experiments. I just hope I don't get a letter home from a teacher that she's expressed interest in growing potatoes in her own excrement, or blew up a lab trying to make water from burning hydrogen. Actually, scratch that, bring it on.

What you do as a parent does matter, and how you share and approach those things with your children matters even more. I've been fortunate enough now after struggling with poverty in periods throughout my life, that I'm all for spending my time and resources encouraging my kids to reach for those stars, and be exceptional citizens of this universe. I would be remiss in not mentioning how much science fiction and fantasy allow our kids to escape, to wonder, and to strive for bigger and better things. For many, SFF inspires us to fix these problems in which we constantly find ourselves and to reach for places we've only just seen on our TVs. It's not all sunshine and rainbows though. I mentioned the bullying before this stuff became cool and because we never leave high school, it sometimes follows us as indifference and mocking as adults. Back in the 00's, I worked for a small software company. There was literally one guy in the tech department who knew all about SFF. We would talk after conference calls about all the nominated works on the Hugo ballot and which ones we read. When Clarkesworld Magazine won in 2011, he shared in my joy but because it was such an accomplishment, I wanted to share it with the world which included the rest of my peers at that job and my extended family. The news was met with quizzical brows and a polite nod of the head. Some would ask, "What's that?" but most just shrugged and smiled. I quickly quashed a few inappropriate jokes about what I would do with the rocket when I got it home, but mostly, I just left it alone, deflated.

I then watched in subsequent years how things changed and became more acceptable and more widely known as time went on. I'm curious now if I would get the same reactions were I still with that company. While my children have always been awesome in respect to my career and love of the genres, my extended family has grown with acceptance and eagerness to participate too.

I do think they see how much of my life is comprised of the art of SFF. They know how important it is to me. They see the passion. They see the hard work that goes into advocating, into writing, into creation. When you pour yourself into something—whether it is a fandom, or a passion, or if it happens to be directly related to your job, the people to whom you matter and who matter to you, start to be interested, learn about what you do and who you are. Such is the nature of positive, encouraging relationships.

As to sharing with your family or larger circles that you may find important, keep some things in mind and recognize that your mileage may vary. Some jump on the generation starship willingly, while some need to be shown how cool it is, and how much it matters to you. Some can see the parallels to our own world and situations in our stories, while some may need a gentle kick in the pants to open their eyes. Some may need to be told it's okay for someone to love those genre things that they don't love and that things can co-exist. And some may need to be told it's okay and wonderful to love and share things.

I hope you do with much success.

JohnPaul Garcia with Veronica Belmont at BayCon 2017

The Ops of Program Ops
by Janice Gelb

> "The battle op will first consider the strategical situation and problem and lay out a campaign plan. And in this process he will have complete authority and freedom. The battle op will then hand his strategical plan to the vice-marshal, and from that point on, it'll be the vice-marshal who has complete authority. His job will be to take the plan given him, make any and all alterations in it he thinks it needs for practical purposes and then execute it as he sees fit." – *The Tactics of Mistake*, Gordon R. Dickson

Program Operations ("Program Ops") takes the schedule developed by the Program team and manages it at the convention. Because Program Ops as a separate area is necessary only for larger conventions, people are often confused about what it does and how to manage it. This article starts with a look at the main Program Ops responsibilities, some suggestions about how to run the area, and some considerations and gotchas.

How smooth your experience will be is directly related to the completeness and solidity of the program you are given to run, and the cooperation of the Program team in giving you a complete and reliable handoff and being available for consultation during the convention.

Note – Some of this material is based on a presentation given at the 2012 Smofcon with Priscilla Olson and Ian Stockdale. Also, because my experience is with Worldcons (I've run Worldcon Program Ops nine times for my sins), many of these notes and tips come from that perspective.

What Program Ops Does

The main responsibilities of Program Operations are as follows, with details provided below.

- Ensure that the program runs smoothly
- Handle requests from program participants
- Track, incorporate, and communicate changes to program items

Ensure the Program Runs Smoothly

This is, of course, the main *raison d'être* of Program Ops. Some, but not all, of the activities that help ensure the program runs smoothly:

- Room setups (water, microphones)
- Room signs (for venues with no electronic signs) and participant tent cards
- Flash 5-Minute and Stop signs to moderators for timely item ends
- Supplies and technical equipment for participants
- Tables, supplies, and line organization for Autographings
- Reservations and setup for Kaffeeklatsches/ Literary Beers
- Last-minute issues (absent panelists, technical difficulties, room problems, etc.)

Handle Requests from Program Participants

Program participants come to Program Ops with a variety of requests:

- Addition to/removal from program items
- Rescheduling of program items
- Technical equipment requests and assistance

Incorporate and Track Program Changes

One of the most crucial tasks in Program Ops is dealing with program changes:

- Track program participant additions to/ removals from program items
- Track rescheduling of program items
- Produce change reports
  - Newsletter reports for minimal changes
  - Change sheets for extensive changes
  - Updates for web/mobile apps

What We Need

The main responsibilities of Program Ops are at-con but there are some things that need to be organized before the convention.

Hand-Offs and Liaisons

- Comprehensive hand-off from program organizers:
  - Updated and complete-as-possible schedule
  - Notes about items or people that are not yet incorporated in the schedule
  - Additional information about specialty items, key people on items, special supplies needed for particular items, etc.
- Agreement for regular check-ins by program organizers to answer questions regarding requested changes or situational issues
- Program tracking system that enables change tracking and reports (recommended: Grenadine)
- Tech contact information (ideally separate from Masquerade or awards ceremony tech)
- Venue liaison contact information (for water setups, built-in tech issues, locked rooms, etc.)
- GoH liaison contact information (if the convention has assigned them)

Program Participant Packets

Generally, Program Ops prepares and distributes program participant packets, which often contain the following items:

- Welcome letter (sample available on request)
- Individual schedules
- Back-of-badge schedule labels (recommended: pop-out perforated Avery labels (http://www.staples.com/Avery- Self-Adhesive-Name-Badge- Labels-White-2-1-3-inch-x/product_465914))
- Moderator tips (sample editable text available at http://smofbabe.net/moderatortips.html)
- Ribbons (sometimes just "Program Participant" ribbons; ideal if other relevant ribbons such as Academic Track, Former Worldcon GoH, etc. can be inserted during packet assembly)
- Invitations to special events such as art receptions, "meet the participants" receptions, and the like

These packets are usually distributed when Registration begins, which is often before the convention officially starts. That schedule raises a few issues:

- You need to ensure that the department in charge of obtaining and distributing supplies is aware that Program Ops needs their supplies (envelopes for the packets, paper for printing, labels, etc.) earlier than other departments. If they are not sure they will be able to provide

the supplies on that schedule, try to arrange to buy your own supplies locally and be reimbursed. (Typical supply list available on request.) This information also needs to be conveyed to the person ordering ribbons.

- You will also need bodies to help put the packets together. When you recruit volunteers before the convention, be sure to find out whether they are arriving early and might be available to help with this task!

  Note – You will also need to find senior staff who can staff the Program Participant Check-in Desk prior to the start of the convention. We try to have check-in open during the same daytime hours as Registration.

Worldcon Note – Because Program Ops is staffing a check-in desk and because most if not all Hugo nominees are on program, we generally offer to hand out Hugo nominee packets in addition to Program Ops packets. If you plan to offer this service, you will need to coordinate with the Hugo staff to make sure they know when their packets need to be delivered and to provide you with a list of names to check off. (You might suggest that they also make sure that the person ordering ribbons knows that s/he will need to deliver to Program Ops earlier than other departments.)

How We Do It

Obviously, each person running Program Ops can determine the best way to run the department for themselves. However, I thought I would share some of the ways in which I generally set up the department and run it.

Note – My job descriptions for volunteer positions are available on request. I generally ask volunteers to check the program schedule for items they want to attend and then sign up for a minimum of one two-hour shift per day on sheets that are kept in the room.

Overview

- Room management: I like to have each volunteer be responsible for a set of geographically contiguous rooms during their shift to run 5-Minute and Stop signs. Although you still need to have a few volunteers for errands, the prime time they are required is immediately before and after the program item start time. I think it's an attractive perq, therefore, to allow most of the volunteers to leave for half an hour or so to do their own errands as long as they return for room management. How many volunteers you need for any given shift partially depends on the distance between program room sets.

- Front desk: I usually set up a trouble desk at the front of the Program Ops room where a couple of senior staff can do triage on participant requests/problems. Make sure these staff members know who is authorized to approve changes to the program. If an authorized person is in the room, that person can determine the resolution of a requested change right away; if not, staff take the information and the requester's cell phone number or other contact information. Once a change request is approved, a change form is eventually put in an In box for database entry.

- Program Participant Check-in: Some conventions choose to have program participants pick up both their membership badges and their packets at a separate check-in desk. However, having everyone go through regular Registration to pick up their badges and distribute only packets at a separate Program Participant Check-In desk means that Registration does not have to yank separate badges or provide you with a badge printer, families do not get confused about who goes in which line, and participants don't stand in the regular line and get to the front only to find out they have to go to a different line. (Yes, I know you're going to tell them numerous times to go to a separate desk for their badges. A significant number will go to regular Registration anyway. One of the eternal truths of Programming and Program Ops is that No One Reads Anything.)

  As noted previously, we try to have this desk open during the same daytime hours as regular Registration. If possible, try to have it located in proximity to Registration. Generally, you can move check-in to the Program Ops room by day three of Worldcon when most participants have already arrived, but you can play that by ear.

- Tent cards (nameplates): Some conventions distribute a single sturdy tent card to participants for which they are responsible.

However, this method requires participants to remember to bring the tent card with them to the convention venue and to cart it around with them. For several years, we organized tent cards per item per hour and asked moderators to stop by Program Ops to pick them up before proceeding to their panels. However, a few years ago, we streamlined this process even further (I believe on a suggestion from Jim Mann) and now put each day's tent cards, paper-clipped per session, in colored folders that we leave in the related rooms first thing in the morning.

- Autographs and Kaffeeklatsches/Literary Beers: Although some conventions make these entirely separate areas, I prefer to have them be part of Program Ops given their integration with the program. However, the people in charge are responsible for running and staffing them once the convention is underway. (Some suggestions for the most efficient way to do so is a subject for another article.) Note that how Kaffeeklatsches/ Literary Beers are run varies greatly depending on the convention's corkage waiver. (Please also note the spelling of "kaffeeklatsch" :->)

- Green Room: This area is sometimes run completely separately and sometimes is part of Program Ops. Make sure you are aware of their policies so your staff can answer participant questions about them, and that the Green Room has the information necessary to answer participant questions about the program schedule and how to get in touch with Program Ops if they need more information, have to request a change, or need last-minute tech. (Be sure to stay on their good side: depending on their budget, they sometimes offer to allow you and your staff to sneak in for snacks or drinks!)

Typical Worldcon Program Ops Day

- If the venue does not have electronic room signs, post the daily schedules for the rooms. If possible, try to find a tall volunteer who doesn't mind arriving early in the morning! If the venue has electronic signs, make sure they have the correct information and that it is being displayed.

- Put the colored folders containing the item tent cards in all of the program rooms, which also enables you to make sure that the rooms are all unlocked and have water setups.

- Review the staff sign-up sheets. If you have any gaps, let Volunteers know you need some warm bodies. If no bodies are available, make sure you or your senior staff remember that you need to run signs yourself.

- If you're doing your own tech, review the tech equipment schedule and make sure that the necessary equipment is in the necessary rooms. If the equipment has to move around, make sure you have someone who is reviewing the schedule per hour and tracking any necessary adjustments.

- If necessary for your program situation, make sure that any necessary change sheets are distributed at pickup points, or changes conveyed to Newsletter for inclusion at their requested deadlines.

- Make sure that 5-Minute and STOP signs go out to all relevant rooms at appropriate times depending on the length of program items, and that volunteers get visual confirmation that the moderator (or at least someone on the panel if the moderator is speaking) has seen the sign. Have volunteers shepherd people out of the room to make way for the next item, and do a quick visual check that the rooms are in good order, have enough water, etc.

- [Intermittent unpredictable chaos]

- Check whether you are caught up with program changes in the database. I generally have forms that I ask the front desk staff to fill out and place in an In box near the computers. Set up dedicated times to publish changes (generally last thing before you close up for the day and a couple of times during the day).

- Towards the end of the day, print and organize the tent cards and room schedules for the next day.

Variables

Each convention's organizational structure and venue is different. Here are some considerations to keep in mind when setting up and running Program Operations:

- **Tech coordination (microphones, screen projectors, room signs, etc.)**

  In an ideal situation, you have your own dedicated program tech staff who handle tech for you and on whom you can rely to make sure all items requiring tech have the right equipment and that it is running smoothly. If you are in this wonderful situation, make sure that their contact information is posted in all rooms with tech setups.

  Some variables: Does the venue have built-in room tech? If so, you might be able to coordinate tech without having a dedicated tech person, but it still might not be a bad idea to have one of your very own and not have to route requests through general convention tech. If you have to have free-standing projectors, make sure that Program has tried to schedule items requiring tech as efficiently as possible.

  If the venue has electronic room signs, find out how how and when information is to be provided to them, and how changes are to be noted.

  If the venue does not have electronic room signs, you will need to print them yourself and post them first thing in the morning or after programming closes the previous evening. You will also need to find out what the venue rules are for posting information on surfaces. (We are often able to use white Blu Tack on existing schedule holders to attach our own signs, but our room programs are usually too extensive to fit in such holders and still be legible.) Easels are usually not recommended as they can block safe and efficient room entrances and exits.

  Also, if the venue does not have built-in tech, if there are not sufficient bodies for you to have your own tech staff, you might have to be prepared to show program participants how to use screen projectors. If possible and if the operation of the projectors is not self-evident, you might consider having a sample machine in Program Ops for demonstration purposes. If the machines are fairly simple to operate, consider creating a sheet of instructions that you can co-locate with the machines.

You will also need computers, printers, and Internet access for the Program Ops room. Try for two computers (one for lookups and emergencies, one for standard database entry and printing) and two printers (one high-speed for tent cards, etc.; one can be slower for replacement individual schedules, singleton tent cards, etc.). Do not let the committee try to get away with not providing you with Internet access!

- **If extensive change sheets are likely to be necessary due to a high volume of changes after the printing of the pocket program, who will be responsible for printing and distributing them at the start of the convention?**

  If possible, try to coordinate with the Newsletter department, who will already have a high-capacity printer and distribution plans. If they are not able to handle this task, you will need to request a high-capacity printer and sufficient paper.

- **What is the corkage agreement with the venue? How can Kaffeeklatsches and Literary Beers be organized within that agreement?**

- **Who is responsible for ordering and refilling water for program rooms?**

  Be sure to find out what the arrangement is for

the venue to supply water to program rooms, and what the agreement is for the frequency and process for refilling it. Be sure to get contact information for the supervising area.

- **How much evening programming is scheduled?**
  Some program designers feel that people have enough choices for evening activities such as events, dinner outings, and the like that they do not have to provide a full set of program items during evening hours. Others feel that it is their responsibility to provide a full schedule of program items both day and night. If there are several items scheduled each evening, you will need to figure out your staffing requirements and whether you can ~~bribe~~ request volunteers for evening shifts.

- **Will you allow program participants to use Program Ops resources?**
  You need to decide whether you will allow program participants to use the Program Ops copier, Internet access, etc. This varies depending on how many machines you have, how large the room is, etc. Set up a policy and make sure to articulate it.

Conclusion

I hope this overview and additional tips will help you run an efficient and successful Program Operations area. The ideal result is that attendees have no idea that such an area exists or that any program-related problems have occurred over the course of the convention, and that you and your staff have had a relatively relaxed and virtuously good time along the way.

Space Ships on the White House Lawn
by John Scalzi

Space Ships on the White House Lawn
What if beings from a different world really did land on Earth? In this age of CNN, the Web and instant communication, it wouldn't take long for the news to travel. Then what? How would society deal with it? How would the stock market?
Bill Higgins, Dave McCarty, Steven H Silver, Vlad Stockman, Ron Winsauer
Panel held at DucKon 10, May 19, 2001

Oh God, oh dear sweet Jesus, oh great merciful spirit who dwells in the skies, please don't let the aliens land on the White House lawn. Not now. Not with this president. We all know how he feels about undocumented aliens. He'd tweet something nasty about them, piss them off, and then they'd vaporize all of us. Either that or he'd try to take credit for their existence in the universe, with likely the same result. If I saw space ships heading for Washington, DC, I'd try to wave them off to Ottawa. These days, Justin Trudeau is a much safer choice for first contact. For the sake of all humanity, and all of the living creatures on this planet,

please let them land in Canada.

That said, the "aliens on the lawn" scenario, whether that lawn is in DC, Ottawa, Beijing, Moscow or anywhere else, is a deeply unlikely one. When the aliens come, if the aliens come, they're unlikely to want to talk to world leaders. I think it's unlikely they'll want to talk to anyone. We might even not know they've come at all.

Let's start with one major ground assumption, which is that Einstein was correct and the speed of light is a law and not just a good idea. Science fiction authors imagine all sorts of ways to get around the speed of light—I've done at least three versions myself—but to date all scientific hypotheses to get around the speed of light are highly speculative, and the most attractive (i.e. even mildly plausible) hypotheses involve special types of energy and/or vast sources of energy which would make them extraordinarily difficult to use. So as a practical matter, let's go ahead and toss out faster than light travel.

So our aliens would have to go some fraction of the speed of light in their travel, and probably some relatively smallish fractions, not only because of the energies involved in both speeding up and slowing down, but because while space is mostly empty, it's not entirely empty, and colliding with anything at any appreciable fraction of the speed of light releases a lot of energy and potentially causes a huge amount of damage to your starship. Again, we SF writers find lots of speculative ways around this aspect, or often just elide it entirely, but it's a real issue. In both cases, the larger your spaceship, the larger your potential issues.

Let's arbitrarily say that 10% of the speed of light is a reasonable speed for interstellar travel, in terms of energy requirements and general collision safety (let's also, for now, discount the time needed to accelerate to .1c and then to decelerate from it at the destination). In the Milky Way, our galaxy, the average distance between stars is about five light years (for Earth, our nearest neighbor is Proxima Centauri, 4.2 light years away). So the average travel time between nearest stars is 50 years.

This presents a problem for humans, the one intelligent species we know of, which currently has a life expectancy of 79 years. It also presents a problem for most animal life we know of, whose life expectancies are not too dissimilar to ours. It's not unreasonable to posit that other biological life in the universe may also exist within similar life expectancies—even a creature living an order of magnitude longer than us would still

have problem reaching (and returning from) anything other than the nearest of star systems.

It also presents a problem in that all life we know of is planetary and is designed by evolution to exist in a complex ecosystem at the bottom of a gravity well. For any life more complex than a single-celled organism to exist in space for 50 years (on the short side!) is a challenge. Multi-generational ships can be posited as a solution, but their complexity would need to be immense, and in the end, given the intelligent life we do know of as our sole model, the psychological effects of forever traveling in the dead of space is likely to be immense and probably deeply negative.

But let's suppose some intelligent race (us or anyone else) decided to brave the vast expanses of time and space to visit a nearby star system. Would we or they, on discovering a world filled with life (and possibly intelligent life), plop down on what passes for a grassy field there, and extend our version of a hand to whatever showed up to see us do it?

No, because we (and presumably any creature intelligent enough to travel the stars) would recognize the inherent danger of their ecosystem to us, and our ecosystem to them. There's a reason we plunged the Cassini spacecraft into (presumably) lifeless Saturn's atmosphere, burning it up, rather than to let it continue to orbit and possibly eventually crash into one of Saturn's icy moons—because we didn't want to risk contamination of those moons by any tiny bits of life that might have gotten onto the spacecraft back home.

The only way any intelligent species would be willing to do that was if the intent was to recklessly colonize a planet, not caring what it did to the existing ecosystem. And, well. If they did that, they probably wouldn't bother being nice about it. But it would still come with immense risk to the invading species—just ask H.G. Wells.

It doesn't make sense for biological creatures to travel between stars. We're too mortal, too squishy and too at risk from both the vast expanses of space and any other biological creatures we might find in our travels. If there's interstellar travel at all, it will almost certainly be by machines. Those machines may be intelligent or not, but they will by design of their creators (either the biologicals who first created them or by their own machine predecessors, who learned to design) be optimized for space and for travel between the stars, able to swallow vast gulps of time and space with much lower risk than biological creatures.

If we accept this premise—and for the purposes of this piece I am going to ask you to save your kvetches to the end—then the question is:

What does a machine designed for space need with Earth?

The answer is: Probably nothing at all.

If it's designed for space travel, then it's designed to optimize energy acquisition in space (which means it's possibly solar and/or scoops up hydrogen and trace bits of matter in the void). It doesn't need Earth for, say, its oil. What about things like water or metals? Well, those things exist in other places, including in our own solar system, where they can be acquired with far less risk of either ecosystem contamination or the native intelligent creatures shooting up the machine in a panic about it stealing its precious natural resources. There's nothing Earth provides, in terms of raw materials, that can't be gotten elsewhere in our system. Basically, if a spacefaring machine decided to colonize our solar system, there are much more attractive places for it to do so, than Earth.

The only thing Earth provides that doesn't exist elsewhere in our system is life. We can posit, for the sake of argument, that our space machine is curious about life and life on Earth and might want to know more about it. But that doesn't mean that it will satisfy that curiosity by coming in for a landing and looking about—at least not at first, or for a very long time. What it is more likely to do is what we do when we look at planets: A bunch of fly-bys, to learn the general gross details of a planet, and then parking into orbit (or elsewhere nearby) for a closer look.

Thanks to humans' extensive use of radio frequencies to communicate with each other, we are immensely leaky with our information. I posit that our spacefaring machine will spend time gathering information from our transmissions to build a working model of who we are and how our intelligence works. How much time? As much time as it needs. This is a thing that has spent decades or centuries traversing the stars to get here. It is not in what we would ever define as "a rush."

If it decides to communicate with us, I would argue that it's unlikely to come in for a landing. Instead, one way or another it's going to plug itself into our communication systems and introduce itself that way. No lawns other than virtual ones.

But again: Why would it introduce itself at all? If it has learned anything about us than it knows how disruptive its presence would be to us. Not just the "holy crap there's intelligent life out there in the universe besides us" part, but also the implications of who and what it is. Being visited by a machine creature from the stars which took decades or centuries to get here would confirm there is no "warp drive," no "hyperdrive" and no useful way for us to leave our solar system in our current form. The stars would be denied to us forever. Our machines might get there (indeed, Voyager is already on its way) but not us. That's going to mess with us.

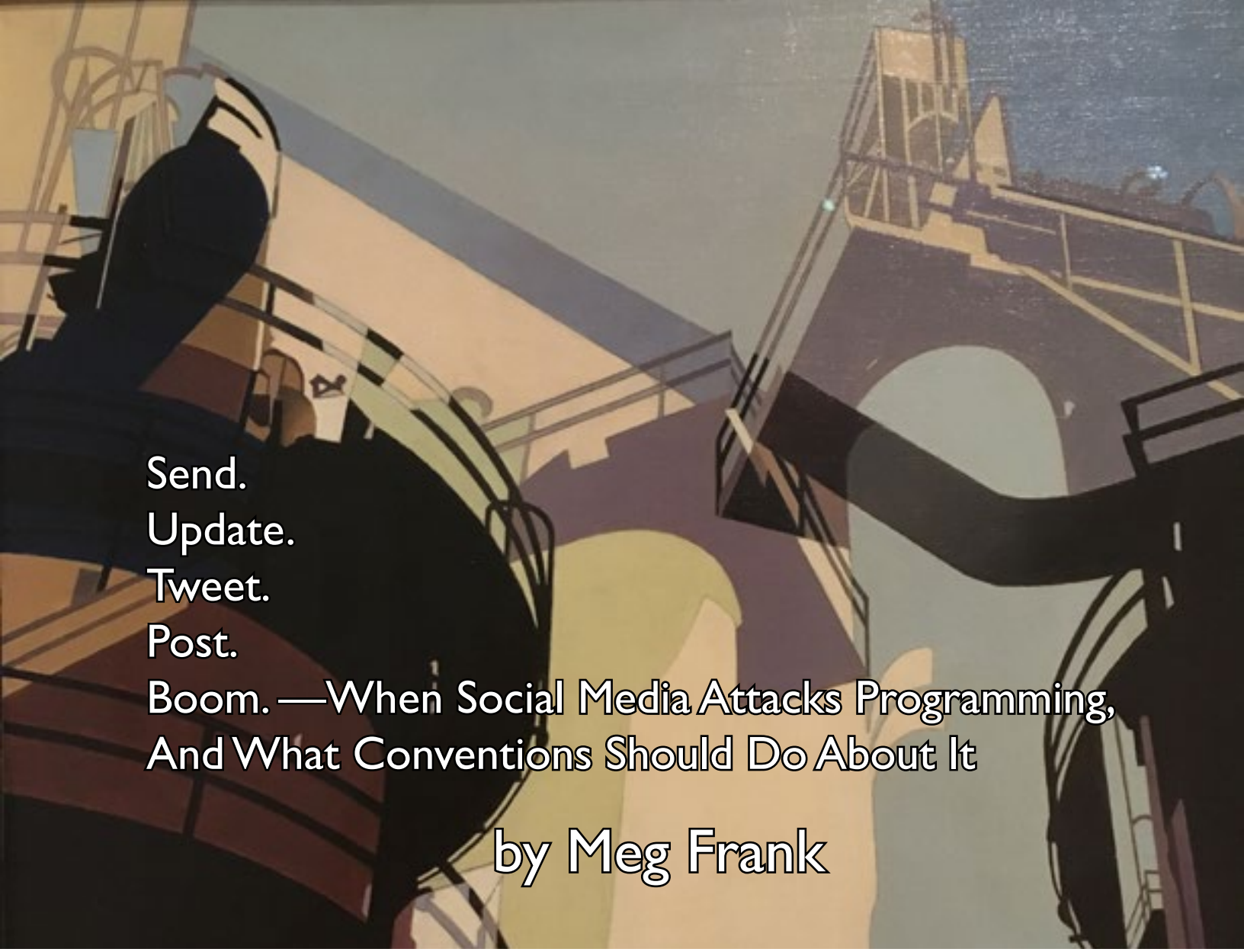
("But it might make us finally stop treating the planet Earth as disposable!" I hear some of you argue. Oh, honey. You forget that when humans get depressed, they go on benders.)

I posit that the two most likely scenarios for this machine traveler dealing with humans is either not to bother communicating with us at all, because honestly what is the point, or by simply pretending to be one of us in the virtual worlds and systems we have created. All it would need is an email address, a social media account and some facility with cryptocurrencies. Everything else would follow quickly enough.

In either case the impact on humans and our systems would be minimal—no disruption to society or markets or anything else, at least, not any more than any other single person might disrupt them.

In which case, the aliens are among us. And you might have talked to them on Twitter.

Where they have almost certainly blocked our current president. And are chatting up Justin Trudeau.



Send. Update. Tweet. Post. Boom. —When Social Media Attacks Programming, And What Conventions Should Do About It

by Meg Frank

To understand what happens when "social media attacks" it's important to have a common understanding of "social media." Because I am a lazy writer, I turn to Merriam-Webster's online definition:

> **so cial me di a**
> *noun*
> Forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos)

Social media isn't sentient, it's a tool. A thing to be used. It's a thing that *many* people use. So, if social media attacks, it's because people, fans, are using it to attack. Fans have always had strong opinions, and now they have an immediate and public way to convey them. Reblogs, retweets, screenshots, and links in chat apps are constantly expanding fandom and fannish conversations. It's fantastic. But most fan conventions haven't comfortably transitioned their communities online and many social media storms, especially ones that involve programming, are because of that.

While it's tempting to chalk social media storms up to jerks being mean online, it's not accurate. Most storms start as reactions to bad communication, bad decisions, or sometimes, both. In the words of Mari Brighe, writing about the Tutti Frutti debacle at Windycon, "criticism is not malice." But it sure can feel that way when a convention's inbox is flooded by fans telling you that you've screwed it all up—especially

when they are fans you don't recognize from your community. It's a level of feedback most conventions haven't dealt with before. The beauty of allowing anyone to connect with your convention suddenly becomes the horror of allowing anyone to criticize your convention. Making things even more complicated is the fact that frequently criticism and conversation are both non-linear and happening in real time. Someone shares a Tweet on Facebook and the comments are screen-capped and posted on Tumblr. Few of these shares leave useful breadcrumbs, so monitoring and responding to these incidents can be brutal for professional social media managers, let alone fannish volunteers.

So, what should fan conventions do about all of this?

First, make sure your convention has an online presence. The right online presence will differ from convention to convention based on a number of things including community goals and resources. At the bare minimum have a website that communicates clearly what your event is about, how to attend your event (prices, directions, community standards), and how to contact the organizers. Include information about that community surrounding your convention and it's history. Find out what platform members of your convention and community use and become active on as many of those platforms as you can. Listen and learn from what your community is discussing. Don't create accounts on platforms that you don't understand or don't have the time to monitor.

Next, get your program team and your social media team working together proactively. If the program is the heart of the convention, then the social media team is the eyes and ears. They should know not only what your members are saying about your convention, but also what your members and adjacent fans are saying about other conventions. They can help the programming team identify potentially problematic or stale panels. They can help program teams find new participants and identify especially relevant topics to highlight. Technology and social media allow instantaneous connections across the globe, but it's not the same as two people in a room having a conversation. Conventions eliminate that barrier, and program teams should keep that advantage in mind when structuring their program. If well managed, conventions can continue to host engaging conversations that fans haven't seen or heard before. The possibilities are endless.

Finally, when things go wrong online, and they *will* go wrong online, have an escalation plan and follow it. Focus on finding the root of the problem instead of getting defensive. When fans start yelling, let them know that you're listening and take their concerns seriously. Make sure you *do* take them seriously. Follow up. Be sure to take breaks—the longer you spend reading complaints and intense feedback, the harsher everything feels. Stepping back will hopefully allow you to understand the conflict better, and perhaps find a solution. Having quick and open communications between the programming team, the social media team and the chair team is vital. Supporting these volunteers is essential. Social media managing is demanding work and ripe for burnout.

Social media isn't going anywhere. It's not the enemy. It's a tool. And if fan program teams want to continue to lead fannish conversations, it's a tool they need to embrace.

The Thin Line Between Fan and Pro
by Alethea Kontis

The Thin Line Between Fan and Pro
The line between being a fan and a professional is often thin and permeable. Are the two categories mutually exclusive? Can you be both?
Steven H Silver (M), Eileen Maksym, Paul McComas
Panel held at Capricon XXXII, February 10, 2012

After college, I had no idea what to do.

It was 1996, and I found myself on the streets of Columbia, SC with a degree in Marine Chemistry, and still too young to get into a bar to see a decent band. I could have looked for a job in my field, but I already had a job—Assistant and Promotional Manger at the local movie theatre. So I did what any twenty-year-old book-loving workaholic would do: I got a second job at the local Waldenbooks.

That decision ultimately changed the course of my life.

I had been a frequent customer of this particular store—the manager had a lot of fun over the years recommending all the fantasy and science fiction titles she knew I'd love. Now I was living the dream: a reader who crossed over into bookselling. I got to check out new releases and finish them before anyone else. I got to search the database and order rare hardcover editions of every favorite book I'd ever loved. I even got to recommend books to other customers—titles I knew they would love.

I was one of the best booksellers that store ever had, because I knew exactly what it was like to be on the other side of that counter. Not just as a customer, but as a reader.

After only a couple of months, Jennifer asked me if I'd be interested in tagging along to DragonCon with her and her husband. I had no idea what DragonCon was, but it had always been my dream to attend a Star Trek convention. So I packed my bags and went to Atlanta.

Back then, before the con, all the science fiction and fantasy and gaming publishers had a small book expo. I floated in awe from one fabulous booth to another—Tor and Del Rey and White Wolf and Wizards of the Coast…oh, my! I felt like Dorothy in Oz, and Jennifer was my Glinda.

We had dinner that first night with Jennifer's friend Kuo-Yu Liang—a former sales manager at Del Rey who had recently become Associate Publisher and head of…just about everything. Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman were also there, as was R.A. "Bob" Salvatore and his fabulous wife Diane, and Greg and Nell Keyes.

These people wrote Dragonlance and Star Wars and so many other books that lined my shelves at home.

My tiny little fangirl heart died a thousand deaths.

I have no idea if I looked as starstruck as I was, but I believe I handled myself creditably well. I sat across from Tracy Hickman (a former movie theatre projectionist!) and a young editor who I was pleased to discover had graduated with a degree in Biology. I gave her a high five and joked that maybe I, too, could one day be a big shot SF editor.

"If you come to New York, I'll give you a job tomorrow," said Ku.

It's possible that I thought Ku was joking. (He probably wasn't.) But I knew one thing: I had never had a desire to live in New York City. So I politely declined. Oh, I still dreamed of being an author…I guess I just wanted to do it the hard way.

In the meantime, I met Clive Barker and John Rhys-Davies. I interrupted Doug Bradley in the middle of his lunch—he pushed his sandwich aside and graciously signed my Hellraiser poster. I went with Diane Salvatore to pick up some art from her friend Larry Elmore. Jennifer introduced me to Charles Vess, who took a silver sharpie and drew an elaborate Sandman on the black endpapers of my hardcover copy of The Wake. We stood outside in the heat on Saturday morning and watched the parade. Seeing the 501st march down the streets of Atlanta in formation almost brought me to tears.

Future DragonCons brought me long conversations with James O'Barr, and panels during which I was able to watch J.P. Targete complete an entire painting. I sat in line for hours to meet Anne McCaffrey, and blushed my heart out while Noah Hathaway signed a picture of Atreyu for my little sister. I attended one of John Ringo's panel, wondering if he would remember me from a Baen dinner—he jumped up from behind the table, gave me a huge hug, and ordered everyone in the room to be nice to me.

DragonCon taught me that I couldn't physically do it all. I learned to leave some wiggle room in my schedule for magic to happen. I learned the importance of hydration. Most importantly, adrift in this sea of fandom, surrounded by artists and authors and people leading other people around on leashes, I had finally found the place where I belonged.

Isn't that what drives many of us to our fandoms? That feeling of place, of belonging. Every stranger at DragonCon was an automatic friend, because they loved what I loved. Maybe not every author or artist or actor or IP, but we shared a passion for pop culture big enough to invade our closets and cross state lines. That same kind of passion fuels my own art—my writing.

DragonCon was where I learned how to be a pro. At the time, I didn't see it for the education it was, but being able to interact with such amazing artists and authors and actors taught me exactly what kind of pro I wanted to be…and what kind I didn't. Because one day I would have a book published.

In 2004, I got my first book contract. In 2005, I was invited to DragonCon as a Guest Author. I was living the dream: a fan who crossed over into being a pro. And, just like when I became a bookseller, I intended to be the best professional I could be—not just at DragonCon, but at every convention. Because I know exactly what it's like to be the fan on the other side of that table.

I don't sign my books with "Best Wishes." I learned from Kevin J. Anderson and Orson Scott Card to have a poignant inscription for each book. And when I sign them in rainbow colors and draw all my doodles, I think of Charles Vess taking the time to draw a Sandman just for me.

I don't introduce myself on panels as if the audience is supposed to know who I am, and I don't go on ad nauseam on side tangents (barring the invitation to do so in this essay!). I speak briefly and Tweetably, with genuine love about conventions and fandoms. I make jokes and tell fun stories and talk about things I would want to hear if I were in that audience.

I make sure to profusely thank every volunteer I see, because I know the conventions wouldn't exist without them.

I donate books and swag to convention charity auctions. I put on a variety show every year at DragonCon—featuring other authors—and I've started taking that show on the road to other cons.

I wear corsets and tiaras and glitter more days of the year than I don't. I am loud and enthusiastic and unapologetic about it, because I want to inspire young people in fandom—young people like I was—to grow up and be loud and enthusiastic too.

I want to inspire other authors too, of all ages. If I crossed that line between fan and pro, they can do it too. They just have to be willing to work for it. And the ones that do cross over…they stay in touch.

With the advent of social media, I try to bring more content to my fans outside of conventions as well. I document my travels all over the world in fabulous triptychs. My performances and interviews extend to

YouTube videos. I have review teams on Facebook for my avid readers, a Storenvy site where I offer signed books for sale, and a Patreon for those fans who want to support me in all aspects of my crazy endeavors.

These days, the sky's the limit.

My ultimate goal is to give back at least as much fun and excitement as I've experienced at conventions over the years, from professionals I love and respect.

Oh, there are down sides to being on the Pro side of the table as well. I have many friends who are authors and artists and actors…but I'm lucky if I see them for more than five minutes at a con. Because we're working. (If I want to see Ku these days, I have to schedule a meeting.) Sometimes I run into my friends at panels, but only if I happen to be on that panel as well. (Thus the origin of the "hugbomb": running into other rooms before my panel has started and quickly hugging all the friends I probably won't see again before the end of the show.)

And while I haven't stopped being a fan of things, it's almost impossible to be a fangirl anymore. Forget standing in line to meet a celebrity. I'm too busy rushing from hotel to hotel to meet this person or pick up that thing. I keep hoping I'll get stuck in an elevator with John Barrowman or Neil Patrick Harris, but that hasn't happened yet.

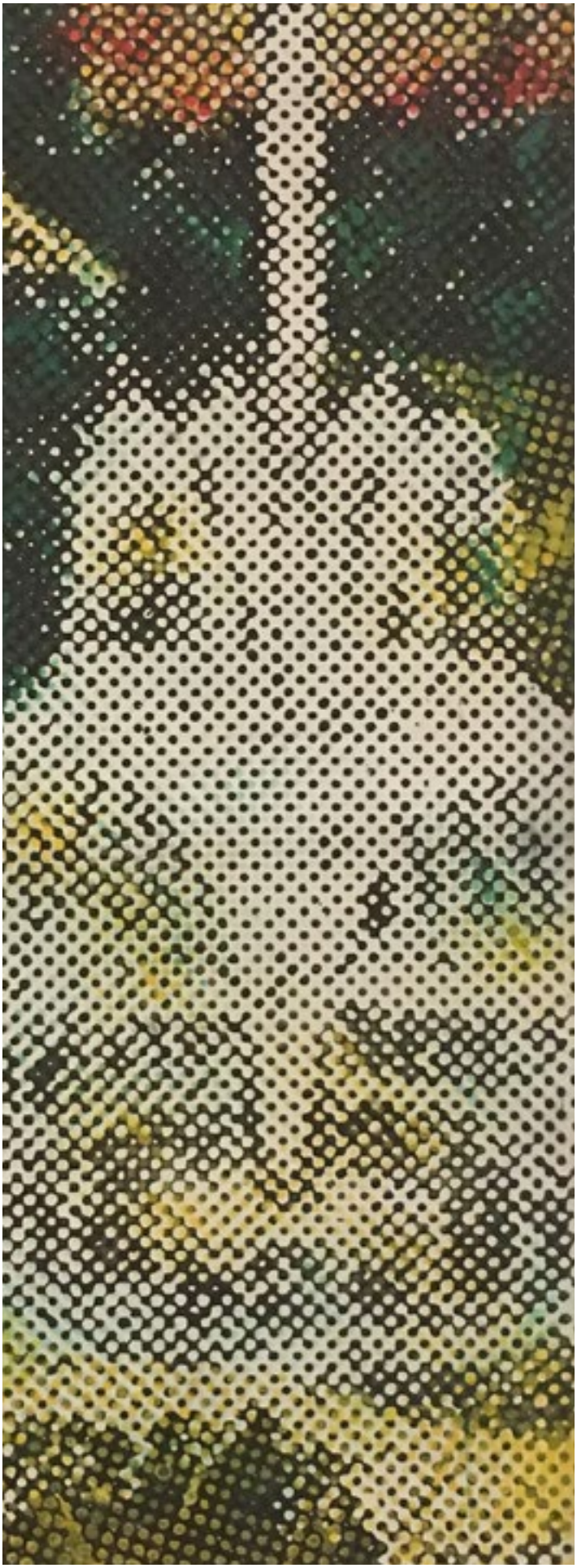
But then I remember: I am that celebrity now, to someone. I am the unapologetic Princess who sometimes brings fans to tears. I am the one who gets interrupted in the middle of her lunch for a photograph. I am the one that some young fan is too shy to talk to, because they are overwhelmed. I am the one walking in the parade, waving to fans lining the streets of Atlanta. I am the person that someone will stand in line for. I am the author whose characters get cosplayed.

Someone out there is hoping they get trapped in an elevator with me.

Because I was raised in fandom, these thoughts are always in the back of my mind. I want to be a celebrity like the ones I met twenty years ago. I want to appreciate how far I've come, and never take it for granted. I want to bring the fun. I want to share the magic. I want to totally make someone's day.

But most of all, I want to be the person who makes another outcast feel like they belong to this tribe. I want to welcome them into my family, the one that was here before me, and the one that will be around long after I am gone.

And I want to leave fandom an even better place than I came into it.



ON BALANCE... (SOME CONSIDERATIONS) BY PRISCILLA OLSON

So, you've connected all the dots and scheduled everyone for everything, and it's all just perfectly hunky-dory….but wait! There's more!

Is your program balanced? Can you do anything more to make it better? (Usually, yes.)

Here's a list of questions you really should think about (and, as necessary, act upon) before declaring your program "done." Some relate to individual items and people, and some
more to how those relate to and interact with the convention as a whole. Some are "mechanical" corrections, while others (especially the last batch) can be construed as more personal and "artistic" (if you will). When all's said and done, paying attention to these issues will result in a better and more "balanced" program for your convention.

<u>Items</u>

- Is this item appropriated for your convention? (E.g., no "Cosplay 101" at Readercon…)
- Is it an interesting item?
- Is this item a duplicate (or near duplicate) of another program item?
- Have you been too clever with the title; i.e., does the title actually tell people what the program is about? (NO in-jokes!....unless this is always done at your convention.)
- Can there be a better precis? (I.e., will someone who doesn't know what it is supposed to be about be able to tell? And, does the précis accurately describe what you want the program to be?)
- Are there too many or too few items that are: serious/funny, literary/business, fannish/fringe, abstract/specific, etc.?
- If this is an old or overused topic, was it a deliberate choice?
- Will anyone (especially on the panel) be insulted/hurt by the topic?

<u>People</u>

- Some "mechanical" things, but don't forget them (and do them early and often, too!)

- Are there actually people scheduled on this item? (and are they actually coming to the convention?)
- Anyone bi-located (on two things at the same time)?
- Are people scheduled at times they won't be available (morning/evening, before they arrive, when they told you they wanted to do something else…)?
- Anyone consecutively scheduled who doesn't want that to happen?
- Anyone scheduled three in a row? (Not good, no matter!)

- Is it the right number of people for the item?
- Are all of these people really knowledgeable about this topic?
- Are any of these participants bores?
- Are they articulate?
- Is this an interesting mix of people?
- No one on the panel hates anyone else on panel?
- Is the item too dependent on one person? (I.e., if that particular person must cancel, will the item still be successful?)
- Is there a moderator?
- A good moderator? (Are you sure?)
- If possible, when scheduling couples, has only one been scheduled per time slot? (unless deliberate.)

Times

- Is it the right length of time for the topic/format?
- Are any similar items at this time? (Are there items opposite each other that will likely draw the same people?)
- Are items related to this topic scattered about the convention, or clustered? (unless deliberate, of course.)
- Is it too early in the convention? In the day? Too late?
- If this is going to be a very popular item, is it opposite a guest presentation? (Not nice!)
- If this program is popular and habitually goes on too long, have you scheduled it with an open space following it? (Should it be the last program of the day in that space?)

Places

- "Mechanical": Is there more than one item in this space at this time?
- Is the room the right size? (Don't have GRRM read in a 20-person room!)
- If people have consecutive slots, are they in (or near) the same room?
- Is the room set up properly for this item? (Does the hotel know what that set-up is?)
- Is the room set-up to facilitate communication and conversation? (I.e., no big gaps between speakers and the audience, doors at the back of the audience, etc.)
- Does the room have required technical needs? Or, with minimal need to move stuff from elsewhere?
- Sound! – Is this a loud item in a quiet area, or a quiet item in a loud area?
- If participants on this program have accessibility issues, does this space work OK for them?

Meta-programming (A more advanced way to play the game….)

- Have you played with themes? Or, beginning/middle/end (etc.) of convention? Or…?
- Do later items pick up where earlier ones ended? Do items make nice arcs? Foster interesting linked conversations throughout the con?
- Were personal satisfaction points met – i.e., were evil people punished, and good people rewarded? (We can talk about this one at another time!)

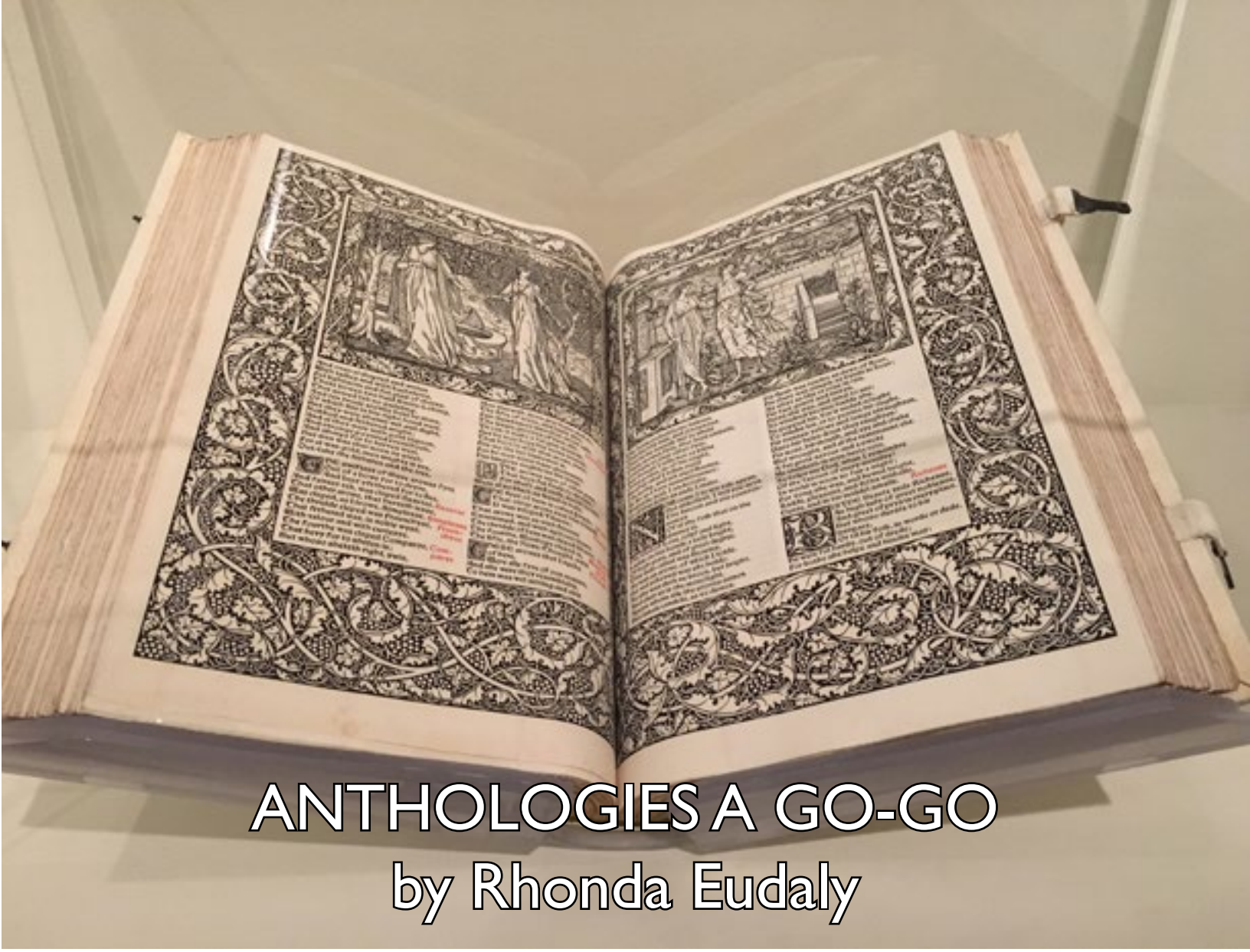
You need to work out the best possible way to use your guests and program participants.

You need to fill your function space with good stuff that will make members clamor for more.

You need to balance the program. You need to care.

(If not, you're in the wrong position on your convention.)

A well-balanced program shines.



ANTHOLOGIES A GO-GO
by Rhonda Eudaly

Anthologies a GoGo, What Does It Take to Get Your Story into an Anthology
Tips and tricks to get included into anthologies. How to make yourself stand out above the crowd.
Keith Berdak, Florance Achenbach, Steven H Silver, Mark Tiedemann
Panel held at NameThatCon 15/Protocon, May 11, 2002

Anthologies are near and dear to my heart. I'm primarily—to date—a short story author, so finding good markets for my work is always a challenge. Magazines and online markets are fine, but limited in how many pieces they can take at any given time. Anthologies are a big chunk of the short fiction market now—in all levels of publications especially in the Small Presses—both in print and online.

I mention Small Presses because the many of the major publishing houses only do anthologies by certain editors with certain themes. The general response is that anthologies don't make money, which may be true of *them*, but for Small Presses, anthologies have proven to be a solid investment—and a way to help promote the authors of their houses in a broader scale, or to give other authors a way into the Press. Given that, it's imperative that a writer stand out—because the competition is *fierce*—but you must stand out *the right way*. And trust me, there is a right way to stand out and many wrong ways.

A lot of the wrong ways to get noticed comes with thinking the rules don't apply to you, or what we have come to call Special Snowflake Syndrome. Guess what? The rules apply to you. To me. To the Big-Name Authors. To all of us. Why? Because in the short story markets, editors can get *four hundred* or more submissions to an open call for maybe *twenty* slots? Editors are looking for reasons to get through the pile as quickly as possible.

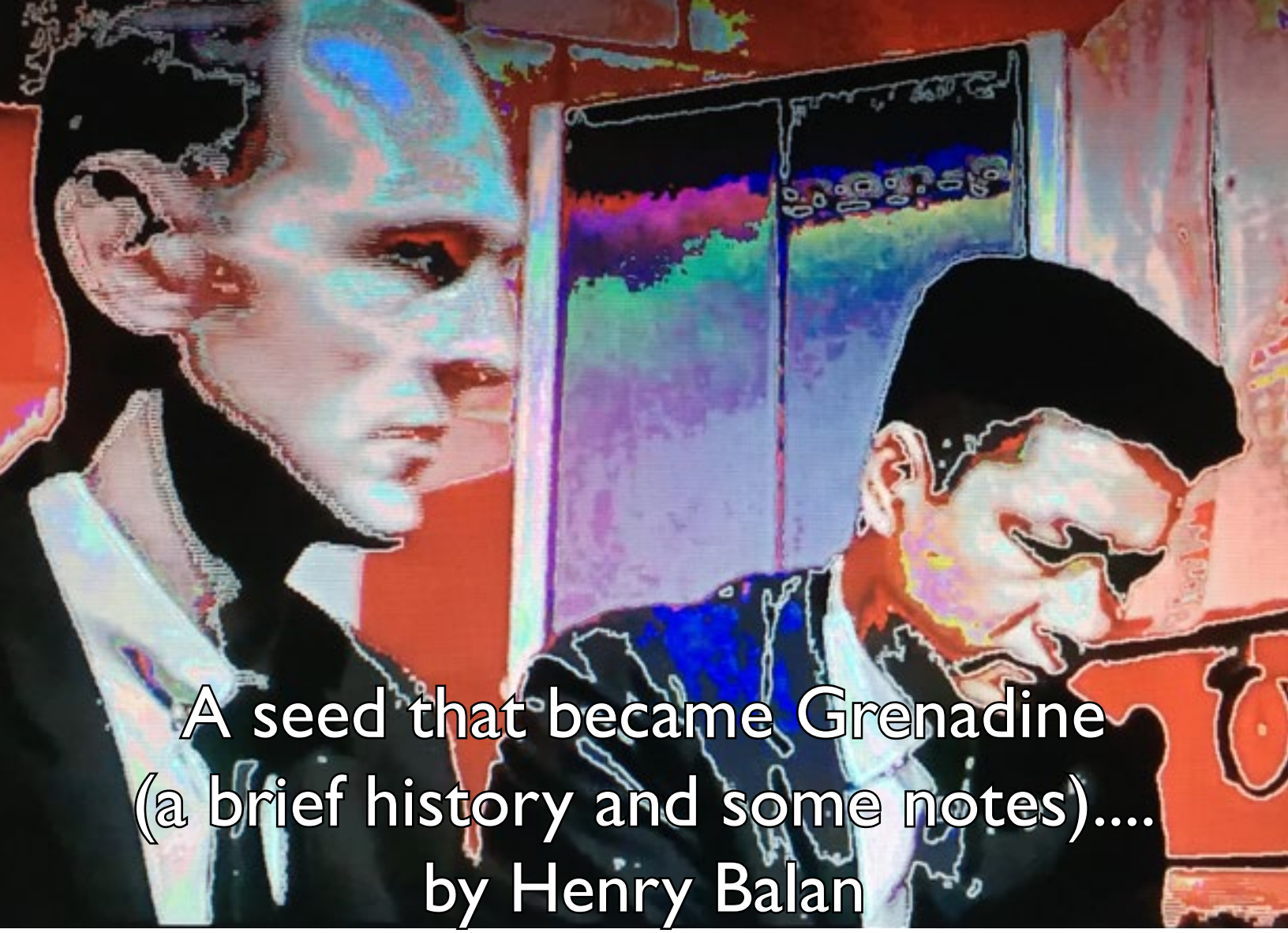
First detail to stand out? Follow the theme of the anthology. There is always a theme, even if it doesn't seem like it at the time. It might be as broad and nebulous as a Science Fiction or Fantasy story

written by someone living in a certain place or age or identification. Or it could be something like a word count—anything goes as long as it's under 1,000 words. If you or your story don't meet the criteria, don't submit the story.

The anthology could also be a surprisingly specific theme like time traveling cockroaches named Bert. Okay, so I don't know of any anthologies about time-traveling cockroaches named Bert, but there *could* be, and if it does come about—your story better be *about* Bert and not just have him stuck in there to make the attempt to meet theme. By creating a story or successfully adapting a previous time travel story to have Bert play a significant part, you're past one hurdle. You've followed a basic direction.

Now to the next hurdle—which is the actually the first thing an editor can tell just by looking. Manuscript format. When I was in college, my screenwriting professor gave this advice—make sure what you write is in correct format. You can have the next *Gone with the Wind* but if it's not in proper format, it's going in the trash. It stuck with me in the mumble-mumble years since then, because it's true in all forms of writing, not just screenwriting.

Believe it or not, there is still some basic formatting rules that are considered "standard". Make sure whatever story you're submitting is as close to the proper format as you can get. If the submission guidelines say Standard Manuscript Format or SMF—that still means in most cases double spaced with at least an inch of margins all around and white paper/screen. Others may ask for block format—single spaced, no indentions, spaces between paragraphs. They may have criteria for margins as well.



A seed that became Grenadine (a brief history and some notes).... by Henry Balan

When Steven asked me to write an article about the creation and maintenance of a programme database I agreed but was not sure where to start. It is easy to say to start at the beginning, though there is not really a distinct beginning, and there definitely is not an end. So where to begin?

Perhaps in the later days of the previous century. Back then I had the idea that it would be great to have a system that people could use to collaborate on programme planning for conventions. At the time I kick around the idea with other members of my company but we decided to explore a different path. So it was not for almost a decade before something was actually started...

Or the spring of 2007, in California (doesn't all tech stuff happens in California somehow?). The first half of that year was the latter half of Renée's sabbatical, and she spent part of it visiting the San Jose State University. In the spring I took a short break and visited Renée in San Jose. When there, I got together few times with Ruth Leibig and Ian Stockdale. Ruth, Ian, and I played around with ideas for a web-based programme planning system for conventions. I still have the note book with various drawings and thoughts from those distant talks. Some of those ideas have yet to be implemented (you have been warned). Those notes were then put aside for another couple of years.

Maybe late 2008? Anticipation was the 2009 Worldcon in Montréal. As it was local I volunteered to help with the IT for programme. The con had decided to use Zambia, a web-based system developed and maintained by Peter Olszowka for Arisia (a Boston based SF convention). Unfortunately the way the Worldcon worked and the way Zambia expected the team to work was not really a match. Though after some adjustments we made the system work for Anticipation. Then there was some discussion of building a new system and revisiting the ideas from a couple of years earlier, Farah Mendlesohn and others were supportive of the idea and were strongly hinting that a new system would be useful.

Along came 2010 and the planning for

Renovation, the 2011 Worldcon in Reno, Nevada. Someone decided that it was time to build a conference planner for Worldcon, actually my memory is a bit hazy as to who initiated the process (Jim, Ian, Ruth, or Janice?). So I dug up the notes from 2007 and picked a technology to use. The team ended up being Ruth Leibig, Ian Stockdale, Janice Gelb, Cathy Mullican, Terry Fong, Jim & Laurie Mann, and myself. Though people wore many hats primarily Ruth, Cathy, and I were doing the coding (with myself as the lead), Ian project management, Janice specs, Terry testing, and Jim, Janice, and Laurie were the customers/users/test subjects...

Primarily the most important resources that any project like this needs are people and time. As the work is done in free time and by volunteers the success of the project depends on the dedication, and some self-sacrifice, of everyone involved; just like running a convention. As with con-running, or any volunteer run activity, it is important to have a core of people who will deliver, and as with such events motivation and drive are primarily internal.

Second we needed a set of tools that people had access to with a low entry cost. The team members were geographically disbursed, from the east and west coasts of North America to Melbourne Australia. The advantages of the modern web and cheap/free methods of communication: Skype and email played a large part with regular meetings on a Sunday (early Monday morning for Janice in Melbourne).

So we had a team, a method to communicate, and regular meetings. The notes from 2007 became the seed for the system. programming language Ruby (basically because I thought the language was interesting) and Rails because it provided a framework to get a web-based app up and running very quickly.

A couple of months before Renovation it was decided that it would be cool if a mobile app was available for members. So some services were written that exposed the schedule and participant data. The mobile app was coded using an HTML 5 framework (Sencha touch) and packaged using "phone gap" with help from Dave O'Neill and Nick Denny from Viafo.

Since Renovation the planner has been used for almost all Worldcons (Chicon in 2012 was an exception), and for a bunch of local conventions (Boskone, Balticon, Baycon...). During the period from 2011 to 2013 the software was further developed to be aligned with the needs of Worldcon. However, the user interface was very basic, this was not a problem for worldcon programme organizers and prog-ops people. But it did mean that there was a larger ramp up time for new users. Also most SF cons budget for IT is low, I found that the web-hosting that a lot of conventions used at the time was not always suitable for the application. So I setup accounts with Rackspace and hosted the early version of the application their passing on the cost of hosting to the conventions that were using the system.

Summer 2013. This was when things changed for the planner. I left my job and spent the summer exploring various options and considering what to do next. During that time I investigated other job opportunities while revamping the code that had been developed over the prior 3 years: updating the various frameworks that were being used, improving the interface etc. Then Philippe, a colleague from my old employer, also wanted to start a new business and we kicked around a few ideas. We decided to build on the planner, improve the user interface, make it a true software as a service solution and develop native mobile applications.

So Grenadine was born. Why that name? Because we needed something that would work in French and English (and many of our preferences, such as Planorama, were already being used for companies and not all bi-lingual).

Since the autumn of 2013 we have added a lot of features to the planner. The user interface was totally reworked, we have added integration with payment processors (Stripe and PayPal) for registrations, auto-generated con-websites, native mobile apps for con members. The hosting environment is also way better that what I and our fannish dev team could do: the application is geographically distributed and the data is replicated between Canada and France.

Improving the planning and the rest of its "eco-system" is now a full time activity. Along with that comes a host of other concerns that previously, as a hobbyist endeavour, we did not need to worry about. The main concern is being able to pay people salaries to work on the product, which means that there is more of a commercial focus. So we have been selling the product to various different types of events, and I am finding out that there some overlap with fan-run events (such as the need for registrations) but also concerns that other planners have that fannish con-organizers either do not run into or are not as worried about.

So what has been learned from this? There are great tools out there that we can use to build systems at a fairly low cost. Having a real event (such as a

convention that will use the system) provides a focus for the team and makes sure that deadlines are met. It is difficult to maintain momentum over the years, we were lucky in that the core team kept together through various Worldcons while working on the features. Though since LoneStarCon and Loncon most people have drifted onto other things (but it has provided the seed for Grenadine). SF cons need a lot of support—often because the systems are home grown and have quirks it is necessary some of the original team to be around to make adjustments.

From my point of view it has been a fun journey. It has taken a lot of hours of dedication over the years from everyone on the team. I think that trying to keep a core team of volunteers together can only last so long (3 years was a good run). Now that the Planner has become a commercial product we can make improvements to it that would never have been realized as a part-time project. So we shall see what the future brings...

Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed...
by Rich Horton

Saturday, March 24, 2004, 1300-1400

Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed
New to the genre or just looking to beef up your reading list? Our intrepid panelists have to recommend a classic SF book, a current SF book and something other than SF that is a must read. Expand you shopping list and your horizons.
Panel held at Millennicon 18, March 24, 2014. Dave Creek, Joe Martino, Mike Resnick, Steven H Silver, Joel Zakem.

"And Something Blue, surely? …"

Let me get back to that if we have time. Something Old? That's an interesting question these days, as it becomes fairly clear that much of the great stuff that sucked us in during the Golden Age (that is, when I was 12) doesn't really hold up. Not so much because of changing social attitudes—if an SF reader can't get their head around attitudes of a different time they need some recalibration—but because the writing is often less than wonderful, and the ideas can seem (sometimes through no fault of the author) a bit stale. Or if not stale, not always quite as arresting and important to today's readers.

There are a few "usual suspects" I turn to. One is Alfred Bester's *The Stars My Destination*, of course, which is still stunning more than 60 years after its publication—even if it's a sometimes unpleasant read (Gully Foyle is not a good person); and even though it seems rushed at times (part of this is narrative strategy, but part is, I think, a result of length restrictions for a book that was first a magazine serial). Another is *Nova*, by Samuel R. Delany. (Is 50 years old enough? And, gosh, *Nova* was published a half century ago?!) Again, Lorq von Ray is hardly a perfect hero—but the novel is gorgeously and pyrotechnically written, and it still astonishes. I could add Algis Budry's *Rogue Moon*: another case of a driven man, an obsessive. Indeed, what makes these books live? The passion and obsession of their main characters, each of whom is essentially unlikable (and abusive), but who remain in the readers' memories.

But to turn slightly away from "usual suspects", I'll recommend a novel not really as good as those I've mentioned, but similarly powerful and weird, and similarly driven by the obsessions of its central character. This is *The Paradox Men*, by Charles Harness, which is much crazier than even *The Stars My Destination* (indeed, about as crazy as Van Vogt but for my taste to much better effect) combining cyclical theories of civilization with time loops and paradoxes and a pulpish but effective deep romanticism. The Paradox Men has its shortcomings but overcomes them—at any rate, if

you love this book, you'll know you love SF.

Something New? My favorite book so far in 2017 is *Spoonbenders*, by Daryl Gregory, which is a lovely warm novel that reminded me of Michael Chabon, about a family of psychics in Chicago in the 1990s. The grandfather is a fraud—a magician—but his wife was something special; and his children all had some sort of apparently real power. And now his grandson might be psychic too. Hardly an unmixed blessing! It's a sweet love story at times, and heartbreaking at times, and it intertwines government plans and mob schemes and a coming disaster that one character knows about but cannot stop. *Spoonbenders* sort of straddles SF and Fantasy—and so do the two novels of 2016 that most intrigued me, Charlie Jane Anders's *All the Birds in the Sky* and Yoon Ha Lee's *Ninefox Gambit*. The first is, I suppose, Fantasy set in a highly SFnal near-future, in which the two main characters, one a witch, the other a brilliant scientist, who grow up as friends and eventually become (for a time) lovers, pursue opposing strategies to save the world. As usual with Anders, deadly serious issues are narrated in an engaging and often snarkily comic voice. Lee's novel is true SF, but set in Galactic far future in which changing calendars can change the nature of the universe—in a very magical-seeming way. It's one of the SF novels that has to teach you how to read it as you go along—which is a good thing!—and it has a fierce moral core.

The Old novels I mentioned seemed to me linked by the passions and obsessions (and, indeed, madness) of their main characters. That's not entirely absent from these New choices—certainly most of the characters are passionate—but there is a certain toned-down-ness to the characterization. Maybe that's a reflection of improved technique—well-rounded characters means fewer sharp edges? But I do miss some of the wildness! (Though at least *Ninefox Gambit* shows signs of that wild weirdness.)

What is meant by Something Borrowed? If that means a novel where someone from the wider literary world "borrowed" SFnal tropes, let me recommend the best SF novel of 2014: *Station Eleven*, by Emily St. John Mandel, set in a near future nearly depopulated by plague, in which a wandering acting troupe preserves Shakespeare, until they encounter a dangerous cult leader. I loved it. But I think for something "borrowed" we really want something other than SF that is a "must read".

Well, there are lots of Must Reads, you know. Robertson Davies' *Deptford Trilogy*. Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth*. Anthony Powell's *A Dance to the Music of Time*. But I am going to go with the great novel I read most recently.

George Eliot's *Middlemarch* is, these days, very often called the greatest novel in English. Of course picking any single book as the "greatest" is a fool's game. But *Middlemarch* is certainly in the conversation. (It was not always so—I recently saw a 1940 Modern Library Edition of the Four Best Novels of George Eliot with *Adam Bede*, *The Mill on the Floss*, *Silas Marner*, and *Romola*.) It's a very long novel (800 pages) and never drags a bit. It intertwines the stories of the ardent and studious Dorothea Brooke, who makes an unfortunate marriage to a dried up older clergyman, whose young cousin Will Ladislaw falls for Dorothea; and the idealistic physician Tertius Lydgate, who also makes an unfortunate marriage, to the beautiful but selfish Rosamond Vincy. There are numerous other important characters, and a whole series of incidents: Dorothea's Uncle running for office in support of the upcoming Reform Bill; a couple of significant deaths (and significant wills!), a blackmailer; financial distress for many people.

Some might complain that Dorothea is a bit of a Mary Sue, or that some of the events verge on the melodramatic. None of this matters. The book is beautifully written—some of my favorite prose ever. It is a very serious novel but does not forget to be funny as well. It is, above all, deeply wise. If ever there was a true Must Read, this is it!

Is there time left? Of course there is! So I can recommend Something Blue. How about two? From SF, Kim Stanley Robinson's *Blue Mars*, the concluding volume to his Mars trilogy, one of the essential SF works of the past quarter century. To be honest, *Blue Mars* isn't my favorite of the three volumes—I think I prefer the first, *Red Mars*. But in reality, the whole set is a series of exceptional novellas, that tell of the colonization and terraforming of Mars (and eventually much of the Solar System), over centuries in the lives of its long-lived characters. Politically fascinating (if sometimes a bit blinkered), scientifically involving (if not always convincing), and full of interesting characters. (And of course no one should miss the earlier novella set in sort of a beta version of the Mars trilogy's future, "Green Mars", which is perhaps my favorite of all.)

And from outside SF, the great Penelope Fitzgerald's *The Blue Flower*, her historical novel about the young manhood of the German writer Friedrich von Hardenberg (Novalis), and his courtship of a 12

year old girl who later dies of consumption. It's a remarkable novel, quite short (like most of Fitzgerald's books), as much about unexpected details of family life in 1790s Germany as it is about von Hardenberg's thought or his love affair. (And, indeed, all of Fitzgerald's novels are worth your time.)

So—any questions from the audience? Yes? What about Ursula Le Guin? Well, of course! I just wasn't sure that *The Left Hand of Darkness* was old enough (it's not QUITE 50 years old), or that *Lavinia* was new enough. But they are both magnificent. (And, indeed, so too is her non-SF early novel *Malafrena*, just reprinted with *Orsinian Tales* in a Library of America volume.)

Indeed, this old Old/New division leaves out a bunch of really awesome stuff in the middle. There's Gene Wolfe, for example. *The Book of the New Sun* remains as great as anything to come out of the SF genre—and it straddles the SF/Fantasy line as neatly as any of the recent novels that people have noticed doing that. And John Crowley—who has a brand new novel out that I haven't gotten to yet (*Ka*, by all accounts outstanding)—don't forget his *Aegypt* tetralogy. Or *Little, Big*. Or my favorite, *Engine Summer*, a nearly perfect, wholly beautiful, wholly heartbreaking post-Apocalyptic *bildungsroman*. Not to mention the great Karen Joy Fowler, who writes mostly SF short fiction, and mostly non-SF novels (with some hints of the fantastical). I think her first novel is still my favorite (and I think it's SF): *Sarah Canary*, a quarter century old now.

(But I could go on and on: *A Deepness in the Sky*. *Ares Express*. *The Sky So Big and Black*. *The Anubis Gates*. *Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norell*.)

Ah, well, we're out of time now. Thanks to a great audience!

Running a Children's Program
by Lisa Hertel

When fandom was first founded, nobody thought about a children's program. It wasn't until the 1970's, when the male-female ratio improved enough to make interfan marriage and children likely, that the first thoughts of having some place at a convention to leave, and perhaps entertain, your child crossed into the fannish consciousness. The first children's program that I know of was at Noreascon II (1980), when two couples, both on the committee, had children. In the beginning, it started as something barely more than babysitting, but as fannish families aged, they wanted more, and now several conventions have extensive programs geared to kids of all ages.

Many smaller conventions, however, still eschew a children's program. It's true that it does cost quite a bit, especially to start one. Craft supplies are a major expense, and bulky: soon, the pile of 'kid's crap' may threaten to overtake your storage. But the expense is often outweighed by the benefits: keeping noisy younger kids out of hallways, allowing committee and program participants who are parents to fully volunteer, and even attracting families.

Program Philosophy

There are many aspects to building a children's program. First, consider the ages you wish to service. There are five basic age categories:

- Infant (under 2) – not much you can do with this age but keep them safe and provide approved toys; check with local laws as to approved adult/child ratios
- Toddler/preschooler (2 – 5) – very short attention span; may be able to do simple crafts; needs snacks and probably diapers; like to run around; care may be governed by laws; must have two adults minimum (for potty break coverage)
- Early elementary (6 – 9) – moderately short attention span; can do more complex crafts, read/write, and participant in some structured activities; bathroom independent, but need supervision & watching when outside the kids' area
- Tweens (10 – 12) – have different interests than any other group, often focused on relationships; still prefer hands-on participatory activities; require some autonomy
- Teens (13 – 16) – can participate in adult activities, but prefer to be with their peers in an unstructured environment; will still enjoy sufficiently advanced crafts and hands-on activities; probably should be allowed to come and go freely

Each age group has its own needs, interests, and capabilities. Most conventions are too small to service all groups, and ignore one or both groups on the ends (infants, toddlers, and teens). Conventions also often lump together several groups, which poses a challenge to the person running children's program. The commonest division is to provide basic babysitting care for children under 5 or 6, and activities for elementary-aged children under 13. Some will run program, such as anime, for teens as part of the normal program.

Once you've sorted out age groups, there's a philosophical question to answer: are you program, or childcare? In part, local laws may dictate this. Many conventions create a cut-off age, under which a child may not roam alone. If your convention is very small, and the children are well known, it's likely that children of all ages can roam at will.

On the total program side, children's program does not close for lunch, does not provide snacks, and does not supervise who is going where—after all, the general program allows ebb and flow. Instead, it just concentrates on offering program items that will appeal to the target age group. Adults are usually welcome to join in, though children often get preference on limited materials. Depending on the size of your younger population, it is reasonable to consider this a one-person-run program track. Basically, if children are free to wander in and out (perhaps with suitable parameters set by parents), then you are program.

On the total childcare side, parents (or other responsible parties) are required to sign children out of a room, to which non-parentally associated adults may not enter. Snacks, and sometimes meals, are provided. Care is often given professionally, which comes at an expensive price. Conventions often chose to 'hide' the childcare room, by only telling parents the location. Parents may also be charged extra, or pay by the hour, for the professional care. While expensive, professional care has two advantages: it only takes one person to find and organize an agency, and none of your staff burns out by being stuck in a room with small children all weekend. In essence, though, if you are stopping children from leaving the area where children's program is held, you are automatically childcare, whether you use professionals or college students.

However, you can span the spectrum, and most children's programs do. You can limit the egress of children as designated by their parents (usually with red versus green ribbons). Closing for meals encourages parents to feed their children regularly—and some parents will forget, and not feed their kids, caught up in con fever. If a parent wants to feed his or her child in children's program, insist they sit with the child, because kids are easily distracted away from their dinners, and nobody likes to find a cold, half-eaten chicken nugget on the floor. (Due to the prevalence of allergies, it's usually better if kids eat elsewhere.) You can serve snacks, which is usually a good idea with younger children, anyway; just be careful to avoid the common allergens, such as chocolate and peanuts, and have a gluten-free, dairy-free, wheat-free snack available, such as fruit snacks. Juice boxes, while more expensive than buying a bottle of juice, spill less; buy the small ones, and let older kids drink two. (Anyone with severe allergies really ought to bring their own snacks.)

Practical Concerns

When one deals with children nowadays, one often deals with severe medical conditions. It's a very good idea to have the parents fill out a simple form with their basic information (hotel room number, cell number, who can pick the kids up if it's restricted, and allergies or medical conditions). If possible, one person in the children's program should know basic first aid, including child CPR, and, if possible, how to use an Epi-Pen and an inhaler. Anaphylactic allergies, ADHD, asthma, diabetes, learning disorders, and autism-spectrum diseases are fairly common. If you honestly feel you can't deal with a child's particular medical condition, tell the parents as quickly as possible, and offer to refund memberships as needed. Always have the childcare contact information on the convention's website, so that parents may send in their concerns pre-con. Some year-to-year carry-over in childcare staff is useful, as the 'problem' children become known.

Be sure that parents always write their cell number on the back of all kids' badges, through age 16 or 18. Have Sharpies at registration and in children's program.

Many conventions worry about the cost of childcare, and who will pay for it. Many years ago, I had one parent tell me that an adult weekend membership for each of her kids was incredibly cheap compared to the cost of babysitting. Even with rising convention rates, that is still true today. Many parents understand this, and are willing to even pay extra for a quality program. However, most conventions consider childcare, which is oftenest used by those either working the convention, or on the program, as an acceptable loss. For one,

without the program, you would lose the entire family, including not only the membership, but also the room-nights in your hotel. (Families are less likely to commute, especially given the disparity between kids' bedtimes and adult ones.) And if that family is volunteering on the convention in some way, you've lost some of your labor as well. Even if you don't have enough children to run a program for a particular age group, have specific methods for parents to meet up and create their own playgroup, or hire a sitter in advance. (Saying "the hotel has a sitter service" is insufficient.)

Program Pointers

Kids are not miniature adults. They have different interests, a different attention span, and a different way of interacting. Whereas your standard adult audience is quite content to sit, listen, and maybe ask questions, that sort of program items will not work for children up to tweens, even in a more unstructured setting. Kids are very 'hands-on.' They need to be doing things constantly, and the program participants running any particular item have to be flexible, as well. Demonstrations need to be dramatic. Kids want to constantly touch things, create things, and move. Give them a bunch of tape, rolls of foil, scissors, random craft bits, and plenty of cardboard, and they're happy. Ask them what their favorite book is, and they'll clam up. The only exceptions are movies, storytelling, and singing; even young children will often sit and listen in these instances. However, program participants need to not be offended if a kid wanders off to play during story time; the child is probably still listening.

Some program participants will not work with children, and some who will just are awful with them. As to the former, you need to ask well before the convention program is set; if possible, ask it on your program participant surveys. As to the latter, that is something you can only learn by experience. (This is true of any program participant, of course.) Don't be too desperate to put everyone who asks on program, especially if you know an item won't work, or the participant is awful. It's pretty easy to find simple "filler" crafts, especially if you shop websites like Oriental Trading, or do a web search for suggested teacher projects. A bin of Legos will keep 4- to 12-year-olds amused for a couple of hours; a set of wooden trains will keep toddlers through kindergarteners happy for a morning. Both of these are examples of items that require little guidance beyond some refereeing. In the evening, try a movie, but be sure you have the proper A/V equipment; six children gathered around a laptop screen isn't pretty.

There are some things that you just cannot do with children. Stay away from anything excessively dangerous, no matter how much the kids will love it, like jumping on (or off of) beds. Avoid anything that will make parents hate you too much, such as putting stickers in hair, permanent paints, and PG-13 movies. Do not to do things that modern sensibilities view as bad, such as leaving the TV on all the time, stuffing kids with empty sugar, and no hitting children, no matter how tempting. (You may need to discipline children in extreme cases, and don't be afraid to do so, but use modern methods such as time-outs.) Kids love doing the stuff their parents won't let them do at home: making a mess is particularly popular. So long as you have the ability to clean it up, do it! However, be aware of your facility's limitations, too.

Probably the hardest part of running children's program is finding a volunteer. Parents tend to get tagged most often. However, as their children grow up, the parent volunteer moves on, you'll need to find a new parent. Further, volunteering to run the kids' stuff is viewed as unglamorous, and many volunteers are afraid to get stuck in a rut for years. If you're not using professionals, or treating it strictly as program, you'll need a small crew. Recruiting college students as helpers is usually a plus, and conventions can even use volunteers under 18 for the younger set, but they'll need supervision. If you can find someone who is willing, make sure there's a backup to take over. Since there's a bit of a learning curve in knowing who is good on program, the kids' personalities, and what works, it's always best to have an understudy.

Conclusion

If you decide to run a program for kids, know what ages you'll be aiming for, and whether you intend to treat the program as panels aimed at kids, or babysitting, or something in between. Next, decide on pricing, hours, and location. Make sure you have program participants who want to work with kids, and program items suitable to your intended age group. You'll need supplies, especially art supplies, and suitable toys to occupy kids. Finally, you'll need to find a volunteer to coordinate it all, and get them assistants if needed. Add in a little bit of paperwork for safety's sake, and you've got a children's program!

Surveys: The Keys to a Program Planner's Kingdom

by Erin Underwood

No Availability... No Experience... No Interests... No Program.

The Short Version: If you want to be a program participant and you don't fill out a program survey or you only include your availability, you're not likely to be considered for any program items.

The Long Version: Each convention has a small committee of volunteers who run the Program Division. The committee comprises people who are likely familiar with your name and perhaps some of your work, and someone on the committee may even know you very well. Still, you can't count on that resulting in placement on the program or on panels for which you are a good fit.

In most cases, the Program Committee members change from year to year. Some people continue into the next year while others move onto another division or drop out of volunteering altogether. There are also likely to be several new committee members who are not as familiar with you, your work, or your convention preferences. So, if you haven't put much information in your survey, you're not likely to be added to that awesome urban fantasy panel that you would love to be on because you won't stand out as a fit for that panel. Your survey represents you, your experience, and your interests to the person creating and assigning panels. If you only list a modest bio and your availability, you may get assigned to something, but it may not be something that you want.

The program committee's mission is to make the best possible program for the convention, and our most valuable resource is you—our program participants. Yes, many of our best ideas come from them. However, the true source of riches is the experience, interests, and knowledge that they bring to the program items to which they are assigned. Part of building a great program includes making sure that our program participants are comfortable with the items on their schedules and that they have something valuable to contribute to the conversation.

Surveys allow us to take a holistic view of the various skills, talents, experiences, and interests of our participants. The details that program participants include also allow us to search for and find people who can fill holes in the program. The more detail you provide, the more interesting and diverse your schedule will be, but be sure to only include details that you are truly interested in talking about so that you are not caught wondering "How did I get on this panel?"

Different conventions use different survey processes. However, every convention uses some sort of survey as their primary communication vehicle to send your information to the program committee. In order to help step you through the process, here is a

quick list of things to keep in mind when completing a survey.

Contact Information

Most conventions need to know your mailing address, real name, pen/professional name, and how to contact you.

Availability

Surveys will have a section for you to add your availability. This is how the program committee knows when to schedule you and when not to schedule you. Without knowing when you are available, you will either not be put on programming or will be given time slots that do not work with your personal schedule. It is always a challenge to find program participants who are available for the first panel of the day, panels after 6:00 pm, and the first few panels of the convention as well as the last few panels of the convention. People who can do these slots are able to fill important programming holes and have a good chance of getting on program.

Dos: The wider your availability, the more likely you are to be scheduled. So, add all of the times that you are comfortable adding to your schedule. If your availability changes after you submit your survey, be sure to update your availability as soon as you know it.

Don'ts: If your availability changes please don't forget to share that with the program committee until after your schedule comes out because it creates a tremendous amount of strain on the committee to remove you from items, find a new item for you (if possible), and to fill the opening that you created. In some cases, the program item has to be removed or we may have to shuffle multiple program items (with up to five people each) in order to accommodate you, and sometimes that simply isn't possible. The end result is that you may not receive replacement items.

Types of Program Items

General interest items are those general items that happen at every convention, ranging from panels to solo talks, kaffeeklatches, autographing, etc.

Dos: Choose any type of item that you are comfortable doing. If you are unsure about something, feel free to ask the program committee.

Don'ts: Avoid checking everything just to get on programming.

Share Your Program Ideas

This is your opportunity to share ideas that you think would make for interesting conversations or presentations. Again, some of a program's best program items come from the participants themselves.

Dos: Do try to share an idea or two. It's okay if you only provide a short phrase, but if you can also provide short description and title as well that is much appreciated. Most program committees will try to schedule you for topics that you suggest.

Don'ts: Write pages of information that isn't succinct with a coherent topic for the committee to build upon. Don't just add your book's title or suggest a program item that is focused solely on your book. The only exceptions may be academic and non-fiction books that could be the basis for a solo presentation that are focused on the topic of the book rather than the book iteself.

Experience

This is not the same as your bio. This is the section where you can include information about your professional experiences, skills, and hobbies….or even just things you enjoy talking about. They key is to include details that reflect your current interests and things that you are knowledgeable enough to talk about comfortable. If you are a master of art restoration, if you transcribe ancient Arabic texts, if you are a volunteer firefighter, etc., these are all interesting skills that on the surface have nothing to do with speculative fiction. However, if you are comfortable talking about them, you should add them to your survey because your personal experiences and skills not only inspire interesting and new program items, but they also provide the Program Team extra information to add because you never know what program ideas these skills and experiences may inspire.

If the things you are from 20 years ago and are no longer things that you want to talk about, do not put them in your survey. If you were an Army Ranger 10 years ago and were an expert tracker (and this is something that you are still comfortable taking about), it's highly likely that the Program Team will develop an idea the merges your tracking skill with a speculative fiction topic such as tracking elves or ghouls through

an epic fantasy forest. If you worked in a chemistry lab 15 years ago, have not kept up with the science, and don't feel comfortable talking about modern chemistry advances, don't add this information.

Tags

Some surveys use a feature called Tags, which are basically categories for primary topics in speculative fiction. Examples of Tag categories are Fantasy, Science Fiction, Filk, Writing & Publishing, Science, etc. If you are interested in Urban Fantasy or Magical Detectives, you would add those topics in the field associated with the Fantasy tag.

The importance of tags cannot be understated because the Program Team uses them to suss out people who would be a good fit for various program items. For instance, if there is a panel on magical crime fighters who have to work within very specific magical system, the program committee will do a search on the words "detective," "magic," and "systems." If you have entered the terms in the example above, the program committee would likely add you to the panel.

If they have a panel on crazy clown cars in urban fantasy, they would likely do a search on the word "clown." If they have a panel on the ethics of generation ships, they would likely do searches on "ethics" and "spaceships." Sometimes it's also the combination of finding two words in the same survey that match up well and inspire an idea like "latchkey kids who save the world."

Bio & Social Media

Every survey should include a field for your bio and other social media links. This is the best way to convey to the Program Team what you have been published recently, your current professional status, and any other interesting things about who you are, what you do, and what you know. It's terrific to have a concise, well-written bio that is punchy and clever. However, do not substitute punch and clever for useful content about yourself.

Including your website, Facebook URL, Twitter account, Snapchat info, etc is also very helpful. However, if this is what you include instead of a bio or other usable content that would provide direct connections to various program ideas, you're not likely to be included. You should also keep in mind that the more interesting details you include, the more your survey will be set apart from other surveys.

Final Thoughts

It is very helpful to a Program Team to have a complete survey with lots of data because it makes you so much easier to put onto the program. However, it doesn't necessarily guarantee you a place either. If you check every box available and say that you can do anything and everything, it often makes you very difficult to schedule because what does "everything" really mean? It is far better to be complete, accurate, and concise. And, be sure to turn in your survey early!

While there is no magic formula for getting onto a convention's program, turning in a completed survey is about as close as you can get!

Erin Underwood is the Program Head for Boskone 55, New England's longest running science fiction and fantasy convention. Feb 16-18, 2018. Boston, MA. www.boskone.org

Enditorial from James Bacon

The Art of Programme: A bunch of opinions, everyone has them...

Programming a convention is a skillful thing . There are basics which need to be right no matter how skilled or experienced a programmer is, like the participants showing up.

There are many characteristics the programmer needs to come through: conscientiousness, thoughtfulness, objectivity, imagination, and creativity. They also need underlying knowledge of the genre and its participants and experts.

For example, Naill Harrison, can take most titles for a programme item and apply a description and title that will see the subject explored and developed in a way that others fail to do. It is impressive to see in action live, as I have done. His intelligence and curiosity, as well as desire to see exploration of the subject, results in promptive phraseology which is utterly brilliant. He is also someone who can consider the make-up of a panel, and question when three white people comprise the panel about adding diversity.

I despair when programme fails because of people who should know better. Right now I am recusing myself from most programme panels; I have too many responsibilities with Dublin 2019, and so the urge or desire to be on panels is tempered with the reality that I cannot do it justice. I might sit on a panel about Comics if asked, but I learned my lesson in Reno: I can run a con, run an area, run a division, or represent a con at a high level—OR—I can be on programme. Attempting to be on a lot of programme is a responsibility, and doing more can be a mistake. One sees this mistake made a lot.

There is then the nepotism factor, should one be on an item that you designed and select the panel for and approve find that the person it is serving is yourself?

The embarrassment of panelists who make no effort is shameful. I've been on some interesting panels, and I spend hours and hours getting info together, to ensure I do not lack for material to discuss or engage. The last time I was on a panel, nearly two years ago, with two seasoned con-runners and a new author. The upcoming author participant was amazing, and turned up with examples of the comics they wanted to discuss while the "experienced" panelists were "not sure" why they were on the panel and "not really up to date so not a good choice" for the panel. Yet they didn't inform programme prior to the con that they should be removed. Like what the feck is that about? Luckily I had lots to chat about and extracted as much as possible from the other prepared panellist (although it got tricky when some audience members decided to be very critical of *Saga*, a Hugo winning comic, declaring that it was an inward-looking, politically correct, lacking in excitement and fun, and dreadful, but at least the panel mostly stood up for it) Panels like this, and the audience's response, are opinion based, and one does not need to like a comic, but we do need to have, not necessarily experts, but able speakers who know what they are talking about. We need panellists who will be honest about their abilities with the programmer and willing to recuse themselves if they are unable to prepare or contribute because they don't have the knowledge or the time to research the topic.

Every programmer develops a list of experts, fans, and professionals who just never ever let them down. The panellists who just excel and can be counted on no matter the topic.

Lies. They are not great, you know. There is a thing, a sort of fannish fake factual falsehood, that is said in such a strong and determined way at the top table, that it implies it is researched and true, when it is really just an opinion, not actually true. Some panelists are very good at this, earnest and sincere and utterly believable, and they receive agreement, or win the argument, or are believed correct in their statements, but it doesn't really stand up to investigation. Have you ever seen that: questioned data or anecdotal evidence and wondered, "Am I the only person who thinks this could be BS?" Why is it wrong to say "I do not know" or "that is a great question but not a specific I know about, do we have anyone with data on this..." you know, data or evidence, not another opinion. This ties into the lack of research and effort by the panellists.

This is quite common with con-runners who are on panels. If con-runner participants spent the same amount time on their panel researching as they do on running the con, I would be more impressed.

Yet a knackered con-runner expecting everyone to understand their lack of preparation because they are delivering the actual convention, is not fair to the programme chair, the other panellists, or, most importantly, the attendees. Instead, they deliver their opinions as facts, which leads to the next programming failure.

Some "experts" seem to think that status is sufficient when really it is not. One has to be an expert or researched in the discussion subject. I see this a lot more now than I did. Indeed last year I was at a con and the two items I went to were fascinatingly dreadful.

Item 1. TV show item. The moderator is a huge fan and has found some people with interest and knowledge of the show. The moderator lectures, talks, and engages for about 25 minutes, then announces that that is all they have to say. The other participants are unsure what to do, the audience is struck with fear.

Item 2. The Fandom of *Star Wars*. Hey, I know a little about that, and British *Star Wars* fandom has an interesting history. After the display of the tech team being incompetent but then expecting a round of applause for doing their job late, we watch a trailer. OK, I thought. First the moderator failed to moderate. Then a participant decided to explain why Ben Kenobi is a mysoginist. The anger is palpable: this fan is not an Obi-Wan acolyte. As I awaited insight and a new perspective, I learned that the reason this view is held, is because Obi-Wan should have told Luke about his sister when they met on Tatooine, as he had seen them born. He knew there was a daughter, but he hid it from Luke as women are not important. I was on my own in the room, an alien environment, not a regular con, but willing to listen. I looked around and noted others were too. This was not a short explanation, and indeed although I did wonder if the panelist was just unaware that one film was made in 1976 and the other in 2005, but that was the angry premise, and no one would argue or counter. Another panellist was happy to talk about their own game/media cross over item, that was utterly unrelated, but by then, the entire panel was all so preposterous.

A whole panel could be built around the premise of Ben's misogyny, if there were other examples of it, or a discussion of the general lack of women in *Star Wars*, or the fact that women were removed from *Star Wars* I'd be totally into it. An exploration of what George Lucas' issue with women performers is—he cut out quite a few performances: Camie Loneozner played by Koo Stark who teased Luke in Torsche Station, or Jenny who threw a drink over Han Solo in the cantina played by Jenny Cresswell are examples worth discussing. Then there are the four female pilots from *Return of the Jedi* who never made it into the film: Poppy Hands, Anne Murray, Vivienne Chandler and Lynne Hazelden.

Green Three, Red Three, and Gray Two, come in, your time is up.

I hate recommendation panels that don't actually recommend things, I really do. What is wrong with a list by the end of the panel. Something the audience can go and read or watch and explore for oneself, and investigate for oneself. Even Powell's bookshop in Portland has a little plastic flyer display with an amazing list of Sherlock Holmes pastiche works by other authors located in their Arthur Conan Doyle section. That was quite amazing, and that is sometimes what I want, from a panel that talks about a given subject, or appears on the surface to be about recommending works, I want a fucking list at the end of it, not regurgitated opinions on a small selection of things I either already know of or that doesn't encompass the whole subject.

For me comics are a very important part of Science Fiction conventions and they do not always get the best of representations. I appreciate that it is hard to have panels on comics when one does not have the professionals coming. I think Boskone has led the way for getting diverse and intelligently knowledgeable comics experts along, including Eisner Award-winning comic store owners and local artists, and also having a racial diversity to their panels that is bluntly lacking at most conventions. I thought Bubble in Leeds also

gets it right, but they are an actual comic convention. Disappointingly, I suppose it relies on the sentiments of the programme team, but comics are such an important and valid part of what I see as the broad canvas of science fiction, and the more I learn, the more I realise the crossover is huge, yet it seems there is a lack of effort that results in so few panels and discussions about comics sometimes.

Although panels continue to be the primary type of programming, there are other options. I think that we need real experts to give short talks. I would love to see four 10-minute talks on very specific aspects of comics, you know, sort of like real experts who are fans talking about the thing they are passionate and knowledgeable about. I am sure there must be some experts on the themes, references, and influences on *Saga*, or the relationship disasters that befall Hawkeye, Cassandra Anderson toughest Judge in Mega City, or the soiling of Captain America, I am sure there are many more.

I have no concept or understanding of what makes an academic paper acceptable, so one must be careful here. I am not looking for an argument, or any such thing that academics would approve of, rather this could be a fannish initiative to have good speakers talk about a very specific subject, and maybe demonstrate their excitement and enthusiasm, and indeed instil that elsewhere. Keeping the subject to the material, while expanding allowing real fannish experts explore a given subject.

I had a lovely discussion with a Boston fan who reckoned that panels were replicated year in, year out, and the panellists this year would be in the audience next year, to correct the panellists or prove they should be on the panel. I was doubtful, but indeed, I noted it in action. It was fascinating. They were absolutely right. I wondered is that the way at other cons. In fact, I think I just suffered that myself, with my *Star Wars* paragraph above.

Numerous individuals and groups also lobby for particular types of panels. Is it advocating to repeatedly have panels on a given orientation/lifestyle choice? If there are repeated panel 101s (this is an American term for introduction) or 201s is this a politicisation through panels at a science fiction convention? Is it actually an active politicisation of those panels, or a passive attempt to be forward looking and exploreother possible futures? Where are the panels about other orientations/relationships? I was oblivious to these elements until it was pointed out and then shown how every year they are featured, and how the panels could be added up, do the programmers care or care too much, or are they giving in to special interests? Is it the same for Alternate History, I wondered, or the exploration of AI as a negative future?

I worry about AI. I think it could be a real threat to humanity. An earlier generation felt the same about containers killing off stevedores and robots killing off factory workers. Where will the workers work? Ggiven how horrible our currently corrupt version of capitalism is in most countries, I have no faith at all that the ethical and right things have a chance of succeeding. Americans as a society have no desire to ban guns even after they have been used to murder thousands annually. No amount of data and evidence manages to actually persuade or dissuade the continuation of damaging and hurtful practices. Why should we expect AI to be any different? I hope that there will be a more ethical approach in Europe, but here in Britain the willingness of government to erode anyone and everything that helps people is unbelievable. I think that the NHS will be done in, for the sake of profits if they get the chance here. In fairness, the Nordic countries do a good job with some things, and speak of a universal wage. Britain has no such aspirations to look after those who need help. I have to question how much will have to go astray with AI before we actually take notice, and whether it will be the robots against us or the humans against the capitalists challenges my brain.

I want more panels on that, but doubt they will actually provide any real insight. We are a great bunch for welcoming and loving new technologies, but not seeing any threat, or is that just how conventions feel. Is it too much to ask for a panel that explores the real problems with emergent technologies? Does that that our willingness to look at the future a step too far?

I dislike religion at conventions. My wife had an utter meltdown at the 2006 Worldcon because of the way a religious gathering and service went. This was in a programme room and a scheduled item. People of a given religion, and I note that actually it is easy to be vague on that, had an item scheduled to occur. Now the folk gathering who were seemingly in charge of the thing were a particular denomination of that religion. They were strict about gender and because there were more women present than men, the type of service was downgraded. She was fucking apoplectic about it. Like not being funny, but I totally got into the religous stuff that was her belief, happy to celebrate and indeed hosted events at our home, with her pals, and indeed others of that religion, the fried foods were great. Luckily for me no level of conviction was required, I could blissfully continue my atheist lifestyle and I encouraged and supported my wife, and that was good enough, and to be honest, I have the fondest of memories of many things, and moments of sadness with her.

At a convention, this was rubbish, though. I didn't need this type of stuff at a Worldcon where I had responsibilities and really I could barely get my head around the whole upset. But the degrading of a programme item to a lesser programme item because not enough people present of a particular gender, well that is special stuff. And it wasn't highlighted or mentioned beforehand, those in charge of the programme item assumed the authority to do this.

I feel that adding religious items to a science fiction convention is not really the right thing to do. I acquiesced to allowing a prayer group have Easter prayers on the Sunday morning of the Eastercon that I ran, but we had an empty room and it was not a programmed item. But really, it can all go away now.

By all means folk should believe whatever they want, but I think that SF conventions have a serious question to ask if they are designating convention programme spaces to religious or political events or other groups without a tie to science fiction or fantasy. Mostly because many elements of Catholicism with a form of right wingedness that one might also associate with fascists, be it in Spain, or Ireland, where religious control aligns with political rule of law. Rather than incorporating religious or political programming, programme items which explore religious nationalism and its alignment with National Socialism or discussing the future of religion through the science fictional looking glass might be interesting.

Programmers need to understand their own personal biases, and my understanding of my own mean that on some matters, I am not a good programmer.

Children's programme is great. I have enjoyed running it a lot. My approach was to run programme that my pals and I would find enjoyable, to treat the kids like adults, and have high levels of engagement. Good children's programming also requires us to spend money on it. Cons have lots of money, usually, and so if they do, make it great by buying craft stuff and LEGO and other fun things, like lead and melting pots. Who doesn't love making a lead Irish Wolfhound! That you can keep!

The more dangerous the better. That danger can be perceived, rather than reality, and as long as it is inherently safe, it can be great fun for kids. Let them rule, their ideas and suggestions can be the best.

We need to constantly bring new people into running programme, though. Do you feel that? New people. I sometimes think that Worldcon fandom is a bit tired, and indeed have watched on as people who

have amazing reputations know what the right thing to do, and do not have the courage to do it, or just are all out of energy, yet continue onward, and then those enthused and brimful of energy seem to face blockages and impediments to moving things forward, instead of being empowered and enabled.

I loved recruiting new people for the Loncon 3 programme team, loved it. It was a risk, sure, and one or two recruiting decisions were not right, (Sorry about that) but there is no way that I lacked energy, or focus or drive. And someday real soon, I will get there. I know it. I am working so hard on Dublin 2019, and I can feel it, see it. I turned down a work promotion so that I could have a schedule and roster that maximises the time I can spend on Dublin 2019. This is my time, now and I am going at it strongly; I have a two year marathon, and it is mine to race. Yet as the Chair, I can only direct, support, and delegate to the programme team. I have massive faith in them, because they consist of the three best programmers in Worldcon fandom right now. I'll fight you over it, happy to, but I defy anyone to find better, but we need to stretch and reach and find new people. That is also risky.

The odd risk with programme can be beneficial. That is my final opinion. Although I have stood at a programme room door and apologised to everyone who turned up, as the risk turned out to be too great, so that is the other blade to the double edged sword of trying. No one was upset actually, and everyone was nice.

Damnit, I want a programme item about Green 3, Red 3 and Grey 2….