

Chicon 7
A convention report by Evelyn C. Leeper
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Pre-Con and Post-Con Sightseeing

This was a bit of a special trip for us. The convention was August 30 through September 3, but August 27 was our 40th anniversary. And not only that, but Chicago was where we had spent our honeymoon, so we decided to take advantage of this and spend a few extra days in Chicago as a sort of second honeymoon.

So we flew in on Saturday, August 26, and bought a seven-day Metro pass. After checking in to the Hyatt, we immediately rushed off to Pierogi Heaven, since this was the only day we could have lunch at this Chicago fixture.

Sunday we went to the Art Institute, and had dinner at Lou Malnati's, the place that foodies recommend as the best deep dish pizza place in Chicago.

Monday we went to the Field Museum of Natural History, and had dinner at Ma La Lao in Chinatown (which is actually a ways distant from downtown Chicago--luckily the Metro system runs right to it).

Tuesday we had breakfast at Brian's Juice Bar & Deli, then went to the National Museum of Mexican Art, also a ways out on the train. We picked a Mexican restaurant at random for lunch, but ended up with an extremely mediocre meal. Surely there must have been something better, but we could not

find any real recommendations on line. Dinner was better, at Portillo's Hot Dogs, another Chicago stand-by.

Wednesday was a really full day. We spent the morning and afternoon at the Museum of Science & Industry, ate dinner at the Salonica nearby, then walked on to the Oriental Institute Museum for another couple of hours of edification. (The Oriental Institute Museum is probably one of the hidden gems of Chicago.)

Thursday the convention started. The best place for a close, fast, cheap breakfast was Bockwinkel's, a grocery store on the next corner over from the hotel, where we would get cheese or tuna salad from the deli, along with crackers or a roll, and coffee and hot chocolate. (At 99 cents, this was obviously the cheapest place around to get coffee!) Andy Porter was another breakfast regular here, and we had our traditional breakfast get-together with Joe Karpierz there Saturday morning.

Friday we had dinner at Xoco's, a Mexican (not Tex-Mex) restaurant. Saturday and Sunday we had our meals as a combination of food in the Green Room and Con Suites, with supplemental snacks in the room. Since breakfast at Bockwinkel's was moderately substantial, we ate only one other meal a day.

We had breakfast Monday at the legendary Billy Goat Tavern, within walking distance of the hotel.

After the convention ended Monday, we followed a Fodor's walking tour along the "Magnificent Mile" of Michigan Avenue, and had lunch at Nordstrom's.

Registration

My note says we registered Friday. This cannot be right--that would be after the convention started.

The badge backs had locations for various areas, hours of major functions; social network info, and a code for a mobile app.

Hotel

The Hyatt on Wacker Drive is the worst major hotel I have stayed at. The room was not cheap, but the furniture was completely inadequate. For example, the only drawer space were the three small drawers in the nightstand. Considering we were staying ten days, this barely held our underwear! There was no desk drawer, very little counterspace in the bathroom, a sink so shallow to wash one's hair in, and weak water pressure.

On the other hand, we have a fabulous view from the end of the hall of the twice-weekly fireworks over Lake Michigan. And because we had not already signed up for Hyatt's rewards program, we signed up for this stay and hence got free WiFi in the room for our entire ten-night stay.

Although they did not provide free Wi-Fi, the Hyatt did had computers in the lobby where you could check in to your flight and print a boarding pass.

Miscellaneous

Let me start out by saying that getting the Hugo packet, with pretty much all the nominees, is great. Far be it from me to look a gift horse in the mouth and all that, but I have a couple of observations. First, some of the fiction was in PDF format. This is moderately acceptable on a desktop, difficult on a netbook, and basically impossible to read on a Kindle.

One thing the conventions may need to emphasize more is that the Hugo packets are not a right

granted by membership. The contents are provided by the writers, artists, etc., and they put conditions on what they provide. For example, the packets are available only until Hugo voting closes, because the whole purpose of them is to let the voters make intelligent choices. If they figure out how to deactivate the packets at the close of voting, many of the contributors probably would. What is the case is that if you haven't downloaded it before voting ends, you cannot just ask for a copy as if it were another Progress Report.

And speaking of Progress Reports, Progress Report 5 is the one Progress Report it is important to have a copy of before the convention, because it has final schedule information, directions on how to get from the airport to the hotel, and so on. It is the sort of thing you want either in hard-copy or a file (even a PDF file) that you can access on a computer without the Internet. Unfortunately, Chicon did not manage to get the hard-copies mailed out in time to arrive before the weekend before the convention (when we left for Chicago), and they had a web site with lots of individual pages rather than a single page or PDF.

The good news is that the schedules were available in plain ordinary text without too much trouble.

The program had its problems. The first program mailing sent to participants was incomplete, which meant that people thought they had their entire schedule, but in reality did not. "Exploring the Solar System" and a talk by one of the Apollo 13 flight controllers were scheduled opposite the opening night event at the Adler Planetarium. The restaurant panel was during the dinner hour.

There were five barely differentiated panels on science fiction in China, and two iterations of "Comfortable with Numbers", with almost completely different panelists.

The biggest problem, though, was the program track in the "Stagg Field" room, which was entirely fake. I didn't wander the corridors (much), but I did wonder, "Is Stagg Field the same as Field? Or maybe Soldiers Field?" (Given that there were also both Columbia and Columbus rooms, is this so unlikely?) The result was that by the time I realized the item in question was fake (when I finally asked someone), it was too late to go to another item instead. I was not the only person at the Gripe Session who complained about this, but all we got was an explanation of how this was a Chicago tradition. Sorry, what may be okay for a convention of a few hundred, most of whom are in on the joke, is **not** appropriate for a convention of 5000, most of whom have been lost in the convention center multiple times already. (Not to mention at least one person complaining said that their friend from Chicago knew nothing about this tradition either.)

What was even more annoying, though, was the apparently standard response from the convention committee members, which seemed to be (as one person indicated), "Oh, that was humor and you should have gotten it."

I'll add that it was really annoying to hear a lot of complaints (and some praise) at the Gripe Session and see the Con Chair taking no notes whatsoever on them. Even if his memory rivals that of Funes the Memorious he should at least **appear** to be taking notes! And then he left early because of a meeting, and although someone else stayed (and did take notes), it is really impolite to tell the people at a gripe session that, sorry, I can't listen to you because I have to go somewhere else.

Good points included clocks for each panel, a good "con suite" and prompt pink sheets (with the program changes).

Bad points were the fake track (noted above), many rooms being too small and too cold, the scheduling of docent tours when the art show was actually closed, late newsletters, not enough microphones, the format of Progress Report 5 (noted above), and the Ustream problem that cut the Hugo Award ceremony off partway through.

The Dealers Room and Exhibits area were semi-hidden and there was no real "freebies" area.

The Art Show was big, and there was a map, which was useful.

Everything was very spread out, and there was a lot of walking.

[Added post-con:] Although the Hyatt and the Convention Center have been used for several Worldcons, I find most of the rooms too small for panels, or at least for the panels scheduled for them. On the other hand, the layout is too big. The fact that everything is under one roof mis-leads the schedulers into thinking that they can schedule items throughout the complex, when in fact the distance from one end to the other makes it difficult to get from one panel to another in the time given. (It may be that they intend panels to let out earlier and give more time between panels, but that has not happened for past Chicons and it is unlikely to change in the future. Give a panel a sixty-minute slot and they will think they have sixty minutes to talk (not the fifty that the schedulers say). Give them a ninety-minute slot and they will think they have ninety minutes to talk.

Governing the Solar System

Thursday, 12:00 Noon

Jeffrey Liss, Bradford Lyau, G. David Nordley, W. A. (Bill) Thomasson (mod)

Description: "A few centuries from now, humans will be occupying dozens of planets/moons and thousands of space habitats. What sorts of governments will these far-flung settlements have? Will there be a system-wide government? If so, what will it look like?"

Attendance: 100

Nordley said that in his fictional universe, governments serve to adjudicate conflicts, defend the Earth from rocks, rescue people, etc. He claimed that computer-mediated conflict resolution leads to an emperor, and it could, would, and should happen differently.

Thomasson said that in ancient times, travel time was identical with communication time, but contrary to what people think, this was a maximum of about two weeks. This is not true now, nor will it be in the future. He claims that we will not have a government, but instead will have the World Trade Organization (which might be somewhat similar to the East India Company). (Nordley disagreed, saying we will have the United Nations.)

Liss said that in ancient times, distant areas were self-sufficient, but this will not be true for space. Even the colonial United States was not self-sufficient, though this was at least partially because they were not allowed to be.

Lyau thought that a technocracy like that of *Things to Come* was more likely--even the uneducated Boss knew he needed technology.

Nordley suggested that 3D printers will change our notions of independence. Colonies (or settlements, or whatever, but I will continue to use the word "colonies") will need water, but companies like Ceres are working on this. (See also Isaac Asimov's "The Martian Way".) Colonies will need raw materials, but most will probably be available in space. Mining will be financed by duties on goods. The result will be more a network of planets, moons, etc., than a top-down organization. Lyau seemed to assume that the need for technology would lead to control by the technologists, but that seems not obvious.

Liss observed that "science fiction has thought about all this stuff already." For example, in Eric Frank Russell's *The Great Explosion*, groups splinter off as colonies get too large. He also thought that Nordley's "defense against rocks" was optimistic, because we cannot get governments to agree on asteroid defense now. Lyau added that the Moon Treaty was also never ratified by any nation that had achieved or was close to space flight. Liss pointed out that the United States did not ratify the "Law of the Sea Convention" either.

Thomasson said that laws would work at the start, but that over time this will change. (Even now, there is some question of who governs a deep-sea drilling platform.)

One question that arose was what the language of space would be, and Lyau said that as long as an Earth-based infrastructure was needed, it would be English.

(The Chicon 7 panels were all in ninety-minute slots, but I noticed that many of them, this one included, dropped off in quality after about fifty minutes.)

Researching History That Never Happened

Thursday, 1:30 PM

Adam Christopher, Nick DiChario, Martin Berman-Gorvine, Kenneth Hite, Mary Robinette Kowal

Description: "A discussion of alternate history fiction from an author's point of view. How do authors go about researching the complexities of history?"

Attendance: [unknown]

This panel sounded interesting, but there was a room conflict and it ended up meeting in the hall! This is not my idea of an ideal setting (for starters, hardly anyone can hear what is being said), so I gave up.

The Best SF Teaching Anthology

Thursday, 3:00 PM

David-Glenn Anderson, Richard Gilliam, Tim Griffin, Gary K. Wolfe (mod)

Description: "Both college and high school teachers seem on a continual quest to find the best single anthology for teaching an introductory science fiction course. From *The Science Fiction Hall of Fame* to the James Gunn anthologies to the recent Wesleyan *Anthology*, which are the best and why?"

Attendance: 20

Wolfe said that there is a difference between a bit of science fiction and a complete course in it. Most people teaching a course in science fiction want to teach novels, not short fiction. The result seems to be that every publisher overestimates the need for a science fiction anthology in colleges. On the other hand, a good one stays in print for years.

Twenty years ago, the *Science Fiction Hall of Fame* was the most popular. Then James Gunn's *The Road to Science Fiction, Volume 4* (from Heinlein to the then-present) supplanted it. It in turn was replaced by *The Norton Book of Science Fiction*. (This, by the way, was *not* part of the educational anthologies series published by Norton.) Currently the popular ones seem to be *Science Fiction* edited by Heather Masri and *The Wesleyan Anthology of Science Fiction*.

Anderson said that now there is a younger audience that reads collections and authors such as Orson Scott Card. Someone in the audience mentioned the "Alpha City" series written by high school students.

Wolfe said that he was now seeing YA ("young adult") anthologies, and more works in general published as "YA" (e.g., *The Catcher in the Rye*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Flowers for Algernon*). In general, publishers seem to be less strict about what is allowed in a YA novel.

Griffin said that kids want more uplifting stuff. In part, he said, this is because the world is being made to appear more dangerous than it is, with pictures of missing kids on milk cartons and all sorts of other warnings. The old stand-bys such as *The Red Badge of Courage*, *Old Yeller*, and *Souder*, are

all downbeat. He (and others) want more of "the future as a place we want to be going."

[Yet another example of this "world of fear" turned up in my library's new policy that any children *or teenagers* left unattended when the library is closing will be taken to the police station. Now, when I was not even a teenager, but eleven or twelve years old, I would walk a mile into town with a friend, go to the library, buy some records, etc., all without any adult supervision. And unless the library is going to forbid teenagers to go out the door without an adult, making them have an ault at closing time only seems bizarre. And are they really going to take an unaccompanied nineteen-year-old to the police station?]

Anyway, back to the panel.

Wolfe pointed out that there is a difference between an anthology used as a textbook and an actual textbook.

Gilliam noted there are a lot of other constraints, especially at the high school level. Apparently at one point the NRA was checking his anthology *Confederacy of the Dea* to see if it was "pro-gun" enough. Even so, Griffin felt that it was easier to handle controversial subjects in science fiction than in more realistic fiction.

Gilliam said that he once "taught" science fiction to a professor using Harlan Ellison's *Dangerous Visions*, but any real course should include current material. Wolfe noted that on the other hand, a history of science fiction cannot use only current stuff. He recommended *The Best of the Best: 20 Years of the Year's Best Science Fiction*, edited by Gardner Dozois.

Someone in the audience suggested that with e-publishing, it was now possible get individual stories and thus effectively compile your own anthology. But Gilliam said that popular stories are usually too expensive, and for many stories the rights are in limbo. And Wolfe observed that to do this, the teacher must be knowledgeable.

Wolfe said that the *Norton Anthology* represented primarily non-science-fictions views of science fiction. Another example of this sort of thing was *Feeling Very Strange: The Slipstream Anthology*, edited by James Patrick Kelley.

John Kessel said that he was using the Wesleyan anthology, in part because it has a lot of works that have served as the source for films, and students can relate to them more easily. Wolfe said that the Wesleyan was good to give as a "starter anthology" to introduce people to science fiction. However, one cannot teach two or three novels plus a 1200-page book.

Someone asked about international science fiction. Wolfe cited *The SFWA European Hall of Fame* edited by James Morrow and Kathryn Morrow, and *Cosmos Latinos* edited by Andrea L. Bell and Yolanda Molina-Gavilan. (Interestingly, there is one story in common between these two anthologies, but it was done by two different translators, and so is not even really the same story. That brings up the problem with international science fiction--it is very dependent on the quality of the translation. Early English translations of Jules Verne were awful, and *Solaris* by Stanislaw Lem was translated into English from a French translation of the original Polish.)

The Center for the Study of Science Fiction (at the University of Kansas) apparently has a set of syllabi on-line.

Gilliam also mentioned *Life on Mars* by Tracy K. Smith, which won a Pulitzer Prize for poetry.

Someone asked about themed anthologies, but Wolfe said one usually found those in studies of their particular topic (e.g., a book of science fiction stories based on economics would be found in an economics course).

There are a couple of attitudes that work against teaching science fiction. One is the classic, "It's good, so it's not science fiction." (Griffin said that for any X, "There's no good [X] fiction--there's only good fiction.") And Wolfe said he did not like the phrase "transcending the genre."

Logic and Time Travel

Thursday, 4:30 PM

James Bryant (mod), Laura Frankos, Anaea Lay, Lawrence Person, Tony Pi

Description: "If time travel stories are inherently illogical, how can we read them--let alone write them?"

Attendance: 60

Pi said that time travel was indeed inherently paradoxical, with a "see, but do not touch" rule that tries to avoid this.

Lay said that the film *Primer* was the most rigorous time travel story she has seen. Frankos mentioned Henry Kuttner's "Time Locker" as another.

Person claimed that *The Time Machine* by H. G. Wells was the first English-language time travel story. (This is not true. Arguably, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* by Mark Twain is a time travel story that precedes it. I think it is, however, the first to use a mechanical method to achieve time travel.) He also said that "By His Bootstraps" and "All You Zombies" by Robert A. Heinlein are classics in the field.

Bryant said that the logic in the title of the panel implies travel to the past rather than the future. If you travel to the past, you either change something or create the present. Person suggested a third possibility: you change something, but it gets canceled out. On the other hand, a tiny change can lead to a great change.

Pi mentioned *Groundhog Day*, with its repeating loop, but Person noted that it was fantasy, not science fiction. He also mentioned "Wikihistory" by Desmond Warzel and *Door Number Three* by Patrick O'Leary, in which changes propagate to the past.

Someone in the audience mentioned *11/22/63* by Stephen King, and Person added *Replay* by Ken Grimwood.

Pi felt that *Star Trek* has too many ways to time travel.

Bryant said that another form of time travel was John D. MacDonald's slowing down of time (in *The Girl, the Gold Watch, and Everything*), which was also used in "Slow Tuesday Night".

There was some mention of the various limitations authors put on time travel: minimum time, maximum time, length of time, and so on. Bryant said that another one was not having two of you at the same time. Person said that often there is a limitation that you cannot visit the same time period twice (that would fit in with not having two of you at the same time).

Someone in the audience said that there seems to be a theme: "History has gone wrong and we have to fix it." Of course, as Frankos mentioned later, in "The Man Who Came Early" Poul Anderson pointed out that we may not be as adept in the past as we think.

Person said that *Primer* was "the only example of media science fiction on time travel with a new idea." Someone else said, "The only way I could understand *Primer* was to have Ted Chiang explain it to me."

Someone in the audience said that another illogical aspect of time travel was the idea of propagation delay (Pi named *Back to the Future* as an example). There was also *The Butterfly Effect*, which Person hates.

Someone in the audience mentioned *Donnie Darko*. Person said that he wrote a 5000-word review in which he said, "I can't figure out what it's about." After seeing the director's cut, he then wrote, "'I can figure out what it's about."

Various films were mentioned. Pi named the films *Sliding Doors* and *Run, Lola, Run* (which are not time travel, but alternate timelines). Person cited "Unsound Variations" by George R. R. Martin.

Lay talked about "probabalistic time travel." Person reminded us of Isaac Asimov's thiotimolene. Bryant said that *The Gap in the Curtain* by John Buchan allowed one to look into the future.

Frankos said that there was also forward time travel such as was done by Rip van Winkle and the character in *Looking Backward* by Edward Bellamy. (To this our friend Pete Rubinstein said, "I do that every night.")

[Another form at least similar to time travel is time reversal, as in *Time's Arrow* by Martin Amis and *Counterclock World* by Philip K. Dick.]

The Adler Planetarium Thursday, 7:00 PM

Chicon 7 rented the Adler Planetarium as their location for the first night's social event. This was very enjoyable, though the logistics of being bused back and forth were a bit off-putting. Still, it seemed to come off fairly well, although the fact that it was scheduled opposite "Exploring the Solar System" seemed like poor planning.

Are You a Dickhead? Friday, 9:00 AM

Tom Doyle, Guy Lillian, Bradford Lyau, Jonathan Vos Post, Alvaro Zinos-Amaro

Description: "Discuss the works and impact of the writings of Philip K. Dick in science fiction and to our society as a whole."

Attendance: 40

Lyau said that Dick was a big influence in France due to the Cartesian influence.

Vos Post said, "The craziest things Dick wrote about are nowhere near as crazy as what scientists talk about behind closed doors."

Doyle and Vos Post agreed that Dick is best known for the eight big-budget films from Hollywood based on his work:

- | 1982 *Blade Runner* (based on *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*)
- | 1990 *Total Recall* (based on "We Can Remember It for You Wholesale")
- | 1995 *Screamers* (based on "Second Variety")
- | 2002 *Impostor*
- | 2002 *Minority Report*
- | 2003 *Paycheck*
- | 2006 *A Scanner Darkly*
- | 2007 *Next* (based on "The Golden Man")

Zinos-Amaro said that you can read anything into Dick that you want or like. He also said that the terms "Kafka-esque" and "Dickian" are really very similar in meaning.

Continuing on the theme of the films, Lillian said that *Bladerunner* really kicked off the popularity of Dick, but that it keeps changing and improving. [I wonder if part of this is because Dick is dead.]

Lillian thought that one reason that Dick was popular was that he is humane, like Algis Budrys and Cordwainer Smith.

Lyau said that he read Andre Norton and Robert A. Heinlein, and then saw Dick in the science fiction section. He saw *The Man in the High Castle* and it said "Hugo Winner". He knew *Starship Troopers* also said "Hugo Winner", so he figured that was a recommendation.

Zinos-Amaro said that what he liked about Dick was his humorous writing. Vos Post said that it was realistic humor, and it came from pain, and was about schlubs. Lillian said that in Dick's work, "heroes are all guys who suffer." In *The Man in the High Castle*, people say, "We could make really nice junk jewelry of this." Doyle and Liss agreed that Dick tended to favor simple crafts over fine art, both here and in *Galactic Pot-Healer*. But Dick seems to have really unpleasant views of women, especially in *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer*. Lyau said that Dick's first story, "Beyond Lies the Wub", was humorous.

Doyle said that another major theme in Dick was religion. Vos Post said that Dick's last book, *Valis*, was religious, and unclassifiable, just like Edgar Allan Poe's *Eureka*. Lillian said that there is also *Exigesis*. Zinos-Amaro said that Dick said, "When I believe I am crazy⁴ when I don't believe I suffer psychotic depression." Dr. Bloodmoney and *Deus Irae*.

Vos Post said that Dick's wives despaired of him achieving respectability, but it has finally arrived.

Lyau drew parallels between July 1930 in France and Dick's experience of May 1968 in California.

Dotle thought that Dick might be popular because his gnosticism taps into gnosticism's popularity now. Gnosticism, he said, occurs when there is no outside culture for people to look to, for example, during the height of the Roman Empire. The current interest in gnosticism rose during the 1990s, then slumped at 9/11, but is coming back. Vos Post said that Dick believed in what he called "unforgetting" of the early Christian period; Zinos-Amaro said Dick referred to it as "2-3-74" (meaning A.D. 74, not 1974), and the *Exigesis* is part of what he wrote about it Doyle said that Dick was "fundamentally Christian" (though how he reconciles this with Dick's extensive use of the *I Ching* is not clear.

Also, Zinos-Alvaro said that *The Cosmic Puppets* was a take on Zurvanism (a branch of Zoroasterism). And someone said that *Radio Free Albemuth* contended that Christianity is a counterfeit version of the true religion. (This sounds similar to Philip Pullman's approach in his "Northern Lights" series. Vos Post thought this might be the "division between public news and private understanding."

Vos Post pointed out the odd coincidence that both Dick and Elvis lost a twin, and both were affected by this. [Both Vos Post and Liss seemed to drift off-topic quite a bit.]

Closing recommendations include *The Zap Gun* (Vos Post); *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, *The Martian Time-Slip*, an *The Twisted Worlds of Philip K. Dick* (Zinos-Alvaro); and *Ubik* (Lyau).

[I have noticed that if a convention has sixty-minute slots, one notices only the truncated goo panels, but with ninety-minute panels, once notices only the draggy bad panels.]

Friday, 10:30 AM
Robert Silverberg, Connie Willis

Description: "An hour-and-a-half of Bob Silverberg and Connie Willis talking about anything they want to talk about."

Attendance: several hundred

[I have a problem here: I feel strange calling Robert Silverberg "Bob", but I also feel I should be calling Connie Willis "Connie" rather than "Willis". Since this was billed as "The Bob and Connie Show" I guess I will go with "Bob" and "Connie".]

Bob said this was his 59th Worldcon, and everyone he knew at the beginning has died, so now he cultivates younger writers--kids--like Connie Willis, George R. R. Martin, and John Kessel (all writers in the 60s, he note). He said that at this Worldcon, "[I am] having "as good a time as I am capable of having." He realizes he has no reputation for jollity. He then proceeded to give a fake C.V. of Connie, full of details such as, "Her only legitimate child is her daughter Cordelia."

Connie said this was true: "Goneril and Regan I have disowned." She then proceeded to say that Bob needs no introduction but probably should have one. She said this reminded her of the time she was on a panel with a bunch of nobodies: Fred Pohl, Isaac Asimov, and "Harlan somebody".

Bob and Connie said that one thing they had in common was they had both lost Hugos to George R. R. Martin. (Bob lost in 1975 when his novella "Born with the Dead" lost to "A Song For Lya"; Connie lost in 1980 when her novelette "Daisy, in the Sun" lost to "Sandkings".) Bob said, however, that he holds the record for most Hugos lost at a Worldcon where he was the Guest of Honor (Heidelberg, 1970, when he lost for *Up the Line*, "To Jorslem", and "Passengers"--one in each of the then-existing fiction categories.)

Connie told Bob, "You're like the Fred Astaire of M.C.s. To believe you can do it off the cuff would probably kill me." In return, Bob said, "I read 'Daisy, in the Sun' and it was so good that I never read another by her."

Connie said most writers have great ambition. For example, F. Scott Fitzgerald supposedly said to Ernest Hemingway, "I want to be the greatest writer in the world, don't you?"

But Bob said, "I have enjoyed being paid for my labor," and added, "I wrote the very best quality garbage..." He said that Del Rey talked about reprints, but now even the junk is being reprinted.

Connie said that these days writers do not get good advice at conventions. A recent panel she was on about advice for new writers was pretty much all marketing advice. She said, "You can make everyone read the first novel, but not the second novel--all the marketing in the world won't help you, and I'm including *Fifty Shades of F***ing Gray*. (I think this was the first time I have ever heard Connie use such strong language.)

Bob said that you cannot be a professional writer unless you believe that everyone will want to read what you write. He said he has had a career of fifty-seven years and never had another job. Yet he said that when he was on a panel on professional writing, a new, self-published author insisted on monopolizing the panel and did not let him speak.

Regarding these sorts of panelists, Connie said she was smashing the next iPad running a slide show of the covers of their books that a writer props up in front of themselves on a panel.

Connie suggested that Twitter is the new Algonquin Round Table, but said, "Most of my life is spent holding my tongue."

Connie also berated Bob, telling him, "You treat your wife as staff." From the audience, Karen Haber (Bob's wife) called out, "Thank you, Connie." Connie said, "Stand up, Karen," to which Karen replied, "I am."

There followed a discussion of Marcel Proust. Connie said, "Everyone should read Proust." Bob said, "Judy-Lynn Del Rey was a Joyce scholar," and Connie replied, "That explains so much."

Bob said that he has gotten to the point when he wants to re-read Edward Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*..

On hearing Connie was a Presbyterian, Bob said Connie, "Such a baroque imagination, such style, such flair, such a boring church." Connie said that it was not entirely boring: the Presbyterian Church in Topeka, Kansas, had Tiffany windows.

There was discussion of something for which Bob said it was William Dean Howell's *The Rise and Fall of Silas Lapham*; for Connie it was Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which she said was for the right cause but was lousy prose.

Asked what was their most unappreciated story, Connie said it was "Jack" and Bob said it was his 1982 historical novel *Lord of Darkness*.

Bob said he was currently reading Ivy Compton Burnett.

Asked about how to get past writer's block, Connie said, "Write around [the problem] and don't listen to Barry Malzberg."

The next question was about what genre or subgenre they would like to try. Connie said she would like to write a telepathy novel. Bob said he was not writing any more, but instead finding reasons not to write. (He is still doing his column for *Asimov's*, however. Willis observed that even within science fiction, there is a wide array of genres.

Bob observed at one point, "Sometime an editor is right ..." which Connie completed, "... but not very often." The reason, she said, was that you know what you meant to say, but they don't.

Comfortable With Numbers

Friday, 12:00 Noon

Richard Dutcher, Carl Fink (mod), Mike Flynn, Richard Garfinkle, Kendall F. Morris

Description: "A.k.a. "Is 'Innumerate' a Word?" Living in today's world with a grasp of basic statistics; what our kids and writers should know."

Attendance: 30

Fink wanted to distinguish between innumeracy and bad education. Garfinkle compared innumeracy to illiteracy, where someone may be able to sound something out, but they don't have a sense of what they are reading.

Dutcher gave the example of children in Brazilian favelas who make a living selling fruit or other products. If they are given a standard arithmetic test, they do very poorly, but if they are selling mangos for 2 reals each and guavas for 4 reals each, and someone buys 3 mangos and 2 guavas and hands them 20 reals, the seller has no problem in knowing he needs to give 6 reals in change. So the children are numerate, even if the tests don't show this.

On the other hand, people keep buying lottery tickets even though they are incredibly poor

investments. Dutcher says this is because they satisfy psychological needs. Garfinkle pointed out there is a gambling system that works: "Be the house."

Dutcher said that students in one experiment believed in an intentional universe, and cared more about money-laundering than wages as a way of getting rich. Motivation is the issue.

Garfinkle said, "Numeracy dispels illusions, where literacy gives you access to other illusions."

Morris pointed out that innumeracy can have serious real-life effects, such as in the case of Sally Clark, who was wrongfully convicted of murder in the death of her two sons from SIDS on the basis of faulty statistical reasoning (and a pathologist who lied under oath).

Flynn observed that he had his first taste of illiteracy in Budapest (Hungarian being completely distinct from any other major European language).

Morris said that numbers were written left to right, but read right to left. By this he meant that, for example, we cannot read a number if we see only a part of it from the left end (because we need to know how many digits or places it has). So if we know a number starts "547" we have no idea if it is "547" or 547,000,000, or 54,723. We have to count places from the right to read the number.

Garfinkle suggested, "Memory is associative, not algorithmic," and that "the problem is that math is being taught in isolation." Flynn recommended *Statistical Adjustment of Ata* by William E. Deming; Fink recommended *Proofiness: The Dark Arts of Mathematical Deception* by Charles Seife.

Dutcher claimed that numeracy is a social phenomenon, not a mathematical one.

Books, Books Everywhere
Friday, 3:00 PM

Linda Deneroff, Rebecca Tinkham Hewett, Evelyn C. Leeper, Marcy Lyn-Waitsman

Description: "For those fans who are having trouble finding their bed, fridge, pet, etc. because they are running out of space to store their books, this panel explores how others have solved the dilemma of storage and organization of large book collections."

Attendance: 50

I had hoped for some ideas, but I think it turned out we had an order of magnitude more books than anyone else on the panel.

For example, Tinkham Hewett said that she had just finished a re-organization which involved separating out all the non-standard-sized books to make shelving more efficient. We had to do that years ago.

Deneroff said that the first thing people do is shelve hardbacks and paperbacks separately. (Presumably trade paperbacks go with the hardbacks.)

I said that my problem was that I was getting to old to fling boxes of books around.

Tinkham Hewett said whatever filing method you use, be sure there is enough support for it. (Luckily, we live on a slab.) You also need a climate-controlled area (no backyard sheds!), boxes at least six inches off any bare floors, and some sort of moisture barrier.

For supplies, people recommended Gaylord and Vernon. Artsorb was recommended for controlling humidity. For plastic wrappers, etc., avoid PVC and use polyethylene or polypropylene instead.

For cataloguing, <http://www.isbndb.com> and <http://www.isfdb.org> are very helpful.

One solution to too many books is de-accessioning.

The Walking Dead: Zombies in Folklore, Science, and Popular Culture
Friday, 4:30 PM
Deirdre Crimmins, Chris Deis, James S. Dorr (mod), Nick Mamatas

Description: "Contrasting the original Haitian Vodoun concept of zombieism with scientific explanations involving poisons that mimic suspended animation (e.g. Wade Davis 'The Serpent and the Rainbow') and with current George Romero and post-Romero depictions in fiction and film."

Attendance: 30

Dorr said that in *Night of the Living Dead*, George Romero did the vampires Richard Matheson wrote about in *I Am Legend*, as opposed to the supposed adaptations *The Last Man on Earth* and *The Omega Man*. (Actually, the first of those was reasonably faithful to Matheson.) Although everyone calls Romero's creatures zombies, they are functionally vampires: they pass on their condition to others and there are specialized methods of killing them. This effectively means there are two traditions of zombies--the voodoo zombie and the Romero zombie, plus the "zombie of science" (as written about by Wade Davis in *The Serpent and the Rainbow*).

Mamatas (pronounced "ma-ma-TAS") said that zombification was traditionally used as a punishment, but Romero has it more as a rebellion, and we root for the zombies. (We do?)

Crimmins noted that the film *Fido* goes back to the idea of zombies as servants. Deis said that zombies were still being used after decades as a metaphor; *Fido* was really about immigration and labor. Later, he said that *Walking Dead* was about race, class, and gender. Horror, he said, tells us about our subconscious.

Mamatas says that many zombie stories are about the revenge of the nerds and the geeks.

Deis said there are basically two types of zombies, not based on origin, but on speed. There are fast-moving zombies and slow-moving zombies. (The April 2013 issue of *Wired* has a graph mapping movies to zombie speed.) He said that the slow ones imply a certain inevitability (like Katrina); who will save you?

Mamatas said that we are now seeing a fourth wave of zombie films, about zombies with internal lives. (I do not think he defined the first three.) Crimmins and Dorr later asked whether the zombie was self-aware?

Deis thought what we were seeing now was the theme that humans are evil and zombies are a force of nature. Crimmins gave the examples of Ben being shot by the militia in *Night of the Living Dead* and the cycle gang in *Dawn of the Dead*.

Other recurring themes mentioned by Deis included the fear of contamination and no finality in death.

Crimmins wanted to draw a line between outbreak films and zombie films. Dorr claimed that true zombies are vegetarian.

Deis saw cultural stagnation, anxiety, and angst as reasons why the zombie film is so popular. Mamatas thought that the 9/11 images looked like scenes from a zombie movie. For that matter, he thought *Plan 9 from Outer Space* was a "zombie-esque" movie.

Someone in the audience felt that earlier films, such as *Re-Animator*, were also about exerting control, but Dorr and Mamtas thought that and others were more like *Frankenstein* than zombie films.

Someone asked why fast zombies are less popular. Crimmins said that it is because they are less likely. Door suggested that fast zombies are more like us and less like zombies, and Deis agreed.

Someone suggested that one could interpret Jesus Christ as a zombie.

Dorr said that the reason that *Night of the Living Dead* is in public domain because it had been copyrighted as *Night of the Flesh Eaters* and so had no protection under the other title. (I am not convinced copyright works this way.)

Sidewise Awards Ceremony

Friday, 9:00 PM

Evelyn C. Leeper, Jim Rittenhouse, Steven H Silver (mod), Billee J. Stalling

Description: "The Sidewise Awards recognize excellence in alternate historical fiction. This year's panel of judges was made up of Stephen Baxter, Evelyn Leeper, Jim Rittenhouse, Stu Shiffman, Kurt Sidaway, and Steven H Silver."

Attendance: [unknown]

The winners were:

- | Long Form: Ian R. MacLeod, *Wake Up and Dream*
- | Short Form: Lisa Goldstein, "Paradise Is a Walled Garden"

I never take very good notes at a panel I am on, but one thing that was notable here was a definition of alternate history, at least as used by the Sidewise judges. There has to be a "point of divergence", set in the past, something has to change because of it, and you have to follow the change. (So, for example, a scenario which starts April 10, 1865, and ends with Abraham Lincoln not being assassinated on April 12, but stops there, is not an alternate history.)

Last Man Standing; Frederik Pohl

Saturday, 9:00 AM

Jim Frenkel, Edward James, Dr. Elizabeth Anne Hull (mod), Robert Silverberg, Joan Slonczewski

Description: "Appreciation of Frederik Pohl."

Attendance: 80

Hull began by saying that Silverberg had predicted that no one would show up for this at 9AM, but he was clearly wrong. In a reference to the obvious interest of the audience in older authors, Silverberg said, "I'm Robert Silverberg and if I have to tell you more than that, you're in the wrong room."

There will apparently be e-book versions of some of Pohl's books soon: Baen did some, and Tor will do others.

Hull (who is Pohl's fifth and current wife) said that he proposed through an ad in *Locus*.

Pohl was told by his doctor in 2009 that he had only two or three months to live, but has so far lasted several years. He was 93 in November 2012.

Frenkel pursued Pohl from 1975 to 1995 for a book to publish. A novel Pohl titled *The Complexities of Coupled Faults* had already been rejected by Patrick Nielsen Hayden. Frenkel took it, but noted that the title on the cover would make Pohl's name very small, so it ended up as *The Voices of Heaven*.

Referring to the title of the panel, Silverberg quoted Pohl as having said, "When all my friends are dead, it's my version of the story that counts." Silverberg said that although this was his 59th Worldcon and he has been a writer since 1955, Pohl was editing two magazines when Silverberg was learning to read. Pohl was going to science fiction conventions before Silverberg was born. Jack Vance is older than Pohl (and is probably the only major science fiction author who is), but Pohl's range of achievement is greater. And Pohl is still active--he won a Hugo as Best Fan Writer for his blog, at <http://www.thewaythefutureblogs.com>.

James reminded us that not only was he a great writer, but "Pohl was a bloody good editor as well." Hull said that editors learn from other writers' mistakes, and are also often part of a collaborative process with the writers. However, Silverberg added that as an editor, Pohl was a perverse title changed, and claimed that Pohl would have retitled *War and Peace* as *The Smell of Gunpowder*. Frenkel claimed that Pohl three times tried to use the title "On the Way to the Escathon".

Silverberg pointed out that "space merchants" is a Madison Avenue term for people selling advertising space, so Pohl's book title was a pun.

What were the panelists' favorites of Pohl's works?

James said either *Gateway* or *The Space Merchants*. Frenkel listed "The Gold at Starbow's End", "The Greening of Bed-Stuy", "Gwendana and the Supremes", and "The Mayor of Mare Tranq". Slonczewski named *The Space Merchants* and *Gateway*. Silverberg thought "Day Million" was one of the greatest science fiction stories ever. Hull responded that "Day Million" is a story that Pohl is willing to have inscribed on his tombstone.

Hull thought that too much science fiction is not emotional, and has no internal story. She liked *Years of the City*, a history of New York City in the future, told in two-hundred-year increments.

Slonczewski said that one thing she noticed was that Pohl had strong female characters from the beginning. David Brin said, "[Pohl's] predictive success is impressive" in works such as *The Age of the Pussyfoot*. He also referred to Frederik Pohl and Poul Anderson as "the two poles of science fiction."

Hull said (to Brin?), "I am so pleased you came up with 'Pohlian' because 'Pohlish' just didn't do it." Pohl's autobiography (*The Way the Future Was*) is currently being updated. For example, Pohl was a high school dropout, but in 2009, Brooklyn Technical High School finally gave him an honorary diploma.

[A few months before Chicon, *Locus* ran an interview with William F. Nolan titled "Last Man Standing", in which Nolan said that of the writers of his period, only he, Ray Bradbury, Frank M. Robinson, and Richard Matheson are still alive, and that he is the only one in good health. Nolan's first story was published in 1954: Pohl's first publication pre-dates that by seventeen years, in 1937 (when Nolan was nine years old). I suppose technically that means Pohl is a writer of an earlier period, but that is a technicality. I have no idea how *Locus* or Nolan managed to forget Pohl (or Jack Vance, who was still alive at the time as well).]

**Why Fantasy Dominates Science Fiction
Saturday, 10:30 AM**

Ty Franck, Valerie Estelle Frankel, Scott Lynch, Farah Mendlesohn

Description: "How and why did fantasy emerge as the dominant commercial and literary force in the genre? Where did science fiction lose its way, in terms of attracting and keeping its share of the fans? What can written SF learn from motion pictures and television, and vice versa? What can SF learn from the more successful fantasy works?"

Attendance: 150

There were no microphones for this panel, the room was too full, and I could not even see the name cards. I stayed long enough to hear from someone that fantasy was born in 1970, and the changeover in market dominance was at age 18, in 1988, with steady growth after that for the next decade or so.

What Is Magical Realism?

Saturday, 12:00 Noon

Inanna Arthen/Vyrdolak, Roberta Gregory (mod), Thomas Olde Heuvelt, Jeremy Lassen, Mr. Magic Realism/Bruce Taylor

Description: "Is this a new genre, or just another way of looking at storytelling that has been around for a long time? How does it differ from fantasy or surrealism? Is it international in scope, and if so, how do different cultures approach it?"

Attendance: 35

I have no idea why Chicon listed one pseudonymous participant with their real name first (Inanna Arthen/Vyrdolak) and the other with their pseudonym first (Mr. Magic Realism/Bruce Taylor).

Gregory started by asking, "Are ghost stories magical realism?" Heuvelt felt that magical realism was closer to horror than to either fantasy or science fiction. He said that the supernatural produces fear in horror, but awe in fantasy or science fiction.

Taylor said that the term "magical realism" comes from Franz Roh's "el real maravilloso". He named Rod Serling, Ray Bradbury, and Richard Matheson as the best-known practitioners in English. Taylor defined magical realism as having a realistic orientation, with the fantastic a take-off on it. He recommended the anthology *Eye of the Heart* edited by Barbara Howes. He also suggested *Like Water for Chocolate* by Laura Esquivel (the book and the film) and continued with other recent films: *The Artist*, *Midnight in Paris*, and *Hugo*. He described magical realism as "literature as lucid dreaming."

Lassen pointed out that the term came from art criticism, not from the writers themselves, or even a literary critic. Magical realism, he said, is not a movement, a genre, or a category. A genre implies "an on-going dialogue between readers and writers." And terms change with time. "Urban fantasy used to mean one thing before the 1980s (a nostalgic or paradisiacal feeling about an urban setting), but now it means something different (fantasy set in a city). (This is like "organic" which used to mean either relating to life, or relating to compounds containing carbon, but now is used to refer to farm products produced using certain methods and avoiding others.)

Magical realism seems to set individuality (personal experience) against consensual reality. Magical realism is post colonial (e.g., Salman Rushdie). There (according to Lassen) Bradbury and other American writers are not (and cannot be) magical realists. (I do not agree with this--if I hand you a work, you should be able to judge whether it is magical realism based on the work alone, not who the author is.)

Thomas said that is lucid dreaming is magical realism, than Franz Kafka is a magical realist. Arthen thought that lucid dreaming is closer to surrealism than to magical realism. She saw the term as negative and condescending in communities that accept magic as real. She added, "It seems less so now, but still..."

Heuvelt said that Safran Foer's *Everything Is Illuminated* is magical realism. Lassen added M. John Harrison's *Curse of the Heart*. But he said that M. R. James and other ghost story writers of that sort were but of a genre, and not magical realists. He felt that magical realism was the literature of the marginalized. When someone noted that fans were marginalized too, Lassen said that "Harlan Ellison is a magical realist" was an early, but flawed response.

Arthen felt that an important characteristic was that "the extraordinary event does not pull everything off-center." She cited the films *The Shout* and *Powwow Highway*.

Lassen talked about "appropriating the mask for validation."

Thomas and Arthen both felt that imagination is really suspect these days. Lassen disagreed, but said that people do value non-fiction over fiction. He warned against the dangers of exotification (similar to the dangers or orientalism in previous times).

Heuvelt recommended another film, *Pan's Labyrinth* and a book-film set, *Life of Pi*. (I would add another del Toro film, *The Devil's Backbone*, as well as *The Last Circus*. And there are magical realist aspects in some of Alexander McCall Smith's "Number 1 Ladies Detective Agency" books.)

After the mention of Rushdie before, Lassen cited *Midnight's Children*, as well as some of Friz Leiber's horror (e.g., *Conjure Wife*), and the films *Stranger Than Fiction* and *Cabin in the Woods*. Arthen suggested Nalo Hopkinson's works. Gregory named several films: *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, *Field of Dreams*, *L. A. Story*, *Pleasantville*, *O Brother Where Art Thou*, and *Barton Fink*. (I suspect other Coen Brothers films would qualify as well, and I may as well list *Joe Vs. the Volcano* and *Interstate 60* as well.)

Sometimes Even Hollywood Gets It Right Saturday, 3:00 PM

Deirdre Crimmins, Bob Devney, Tom Dowd, John G. Henry/Jack Campbell, Jason Schachat

Description: "There are countless depressing examples of what usually happens when a good book is made into a bad movie. But on rare occasions, the film is as good (or better) than the book. Which movies are those, and what makes them worth seeing?"

Attendance: 65

Devney began by noting that movies are shorter than books (the rule of thumb is one minute per page of script). Dowd said an even more important factor was that book narratives are internal, while movie narratives are external. Crimmins said that another problem for people who have read the book is that they have an image in their head of the scenes, and the movie will never match that.

Henry said that one could consider Hollywood movies as fan fiction based on the books.

Asked for examples of good books made into good (or even better) movies, the panelists began reeling off titles (no pun intended!:

- i Crimmins:
 - i *Carrie*
 - i *Children of Men*
 - i *The Exorcist*
 - i *Jurassic Park*
 - i *The Last Man on Earth*
 - i *The Neverending Story*
 - i *Pet Sematary*
 - i *The Princess Bride*

- i *The Thing* (based on "Who Goes There?")
 - i *What Dreams Must Come*
- i Devney:
 - i *Bladerunner* (based on *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*)
 - i *John Carter*
 - i *Let the Right One In* (but only with the good subtitles)
 - i *The Whole Wide World*
 - i *Woman in Black*
- i Dowd:
 - i *Contact*
 - i *The Hunger Games*
- i Henry:
 - i *Ella Enchanted*
 - i *The Lord of the Rings*
 - i *On the Beach*
 - i *Starship Troopers*, which Henry said was definitely fan fiction, and was satire, not camp
 - i *20,000 Leagues under the Sea* (the 1954 version), which Henry described as "the germ of steampunk"
- i Schachat:
 - i *Battle Royale* (he said that the movie was better than the game, to which someone responded, "It would have to be a bad game, wouldn't it?")
 - i *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*
 - i *Jaws*
 - i *Sherlock: "A Study in Pink"* (extremely loosely based on *A Study in Scarlet*)
 - i *Shrek* (though the film is very different from the book)
 - i *The Three Musketeers/The Four Musketeers*
- i Audience:
 - i *The Green Mile*
 - i *The Haunting* (I assume the 1963 version)
 - i *Nightwatch*
 - i *The Road to Perdition*
 - i *The Wizard of Oz* (the 1939 version, obviously)
- i Me:
 - i *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (based on "Farewell to the Master")
 - i *Dr. Strangelove*
 - i *Planet of the Apes*
 - i *Quest for Love* (based on "Random Quest")

See also <http://leepers.us/faqs/movies.htm#15>.

Quantum Physics Meets Magical Realism

Saturday, 4:30PM

Tim Stoffel, Mr. Magic Realism/Bruce Taylor (mod), Catherynne Valente,

Description: "The way in which Quantum Physics describes the universe seems more and more to enter the realm of the fantastic. Where does reality end and fantasy begin?"

Attendance: 200 [at the beginning, though more people than usual left as the panel progressed]

This began with Taylor giving a long--very long--description of his anthology *Like Water for Quarks: The Intersection of Magic Realism and Science Fiction*. *The Twilight Zone*, it was actually a French film purchased for the show and Serling's only involvement was the introduction and epilogue.

Valente said that she thought that "*The City and the City*" the greatest example of magic realism in the

field in many years."

Stoffel said that magic realism can be used to apply science (Darwin, Heisenberg, the multiverse) to politics, and talked about "quantum reality." Taylor said that magic realism speaks to us in metaphor.

Valente mentioned Nikos Kazantzakis's *The Last Temptation of Christ* as a magic realism novel that uses the concept of the multiverse. She described it as a "liminal fantasy" (to use Farah Mendlesohn's term).

There was some dispute about what was included in magic realism. Stoffel listed the "Harry Potter" novels by J. R. Rowling and the novels of Douglas Adams were magic realism, but Valente said they were definitely *not* magic realism. She warned, "We fall into the trap of defining anything fantastical not sold in the science fiction section as magic realism." We also have "interstitial fiction."

Valente said that one characteristic of magic realism is that it often consists of long, multi-generational stories. She said *The Moor's Last Sigh* by Salman Rushdie was magical realism, with a narrator who ages twice as fast as everyone else. (Does that make "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button" by F. Scott Fitzgerald magic realism? Valente said that the story was not magic realism, but the movie was.) Rushdie uses what Valente calls a "bait-and-switch" writing style to give the text "an authoritative style."

Valente said something else that distinguishes magic realism is its use of metaphor; traditional metaphor errs on the side of metaphor while magic realism literalizes it. And magic realism often "uses a journalistic style to tell a story on the fringes of what is possible." And there is also (often?) a political element.

The bottom line is that a lot of what people call magic realism (e.g., the film *The Artist*) is not. Valente listed Angela Carter, Jorge Luis Borges, and Charles Yu's *How to Live Safely in a Science Fictional Universe* as examples of magic realism.

Taylor thought these requirements led to some strange conclusions. For example, *Nightstalker* has a journalistic style and often a political element, but would anyone really call it magic realism?

Someone in the audience suggested that the films *In Time* and *Neverwhere* literalize metaphors.

Audience members tended to contribute mostly films: *World on a Wire*, *Mulholland Drive*, *Lost Highway*

Do We Need Paper Books?

Saturday, 7:30PM

Joy Crelin, Amanda Luedeke, Steve Saffel, Ian Randal Strock, John Teehan (mod)

Description: "Publishers, editors and writers discuss the future of paper versus electrons, and what qualities may make paper better for some books."

Attendance: 20

Teehan started by saying we still need books. Strock said that paper books were still needed to produce and spread ideas, and that e-books were replacing mass-market paperbacks, not hardbacks or trade paperbacks. Saffel said, "I love books. I love the smell," but that e-books deliver content as well as paper books (though he admitted for art prints and such, you still need big-format books). Luedeke said that paper books will last as long as they keep making money.

Crelin questioned the word "need". Some cultures have no books, and we could just as easily be saying, "I just went to a recital by the great bard, George R. R. Martin."

Saffel noted that e-books make paper books more expensive (because of smaller print runs. Strock felt that printed books move information further faster. Also, "it's really difficult to read a picture book to a child on an electronic device. It's really difficult to pat the bunny on the screen." And the device is costly, making it unsuitable to give a young child. Saffel claimed there were devices designed for young children.

Saffel noted that greatest growth in e-book sales is in the age 35 and up.

Strock said that the printed book could also be an artifact and a souvenir.

Teehan observed that books do not need batteries. Crelin noted that cellphones are popular in spite of needing batteries. Strock said that if you lose a book, that's a few dollars, but if you lose your e-reader, it's a lot more (the cost of the reader *plus* the cost of all the books on it. And you can lend (or give) a friend a paper book, but not an e-book. Teehan thinks that the lending restrictions are temporary. (I am less sanguine about it--the publishers seem to be going to a licensing model rather than an ownership model.

Saffel brought up the case of Amazon selling people electronic copies of *1984* and then removing those copies from the devices when they realized they did not have the authority to sell it. As people noted, if this had happened with a paper book, Amazon could not climb through a window into your house and remove the copy from your bookshelf.

Saffel and Strock agreed that e-books were likely to replace "disposable" books (e.g., popular fiction where people would sell--or throw out--when they were done reading it).

Teehan said that one basic question is how permanent the digital world is. Saffel said that is related to the shelf life of media (or the e-reader, I suppose).

Audience members mentioned the problems of coffee-table books, changes in format, and libraries. There are also privacy issues--somehow I suspect that pornography will still be sold in paper book form, in person, for cash.

The Election of Stephen Douglas and Other Implausibilities
Sunday, 9:00 AM
Eleanor Arnason, Edward James, Evelyn C. Leeper (mod), Jo Walton

Description: [none]

Attendance: 50

[I actually have a fair amount of notes, unusual for a panel I am on, let alone moderating.]

Walton said her implausibility was the suicide of Enobarbus, though I have no notes on why.

Aronson thought that history was self-correcting, which I think is another description for the "tide of history" theory. Why is alternate history popular? she asked.

Walton said that there are two sorts of alternate histories, the "historical" one, and the more personal one, such as *Lust* by Jeff Roman or *Replay* by Ken Grimwood. She described alternate histories as having an "ironic tension with reality."

Aronson and Walton agreed that *Fire on the Mountain* by Terry Bisson was their favorite Civil War alternate history. James cited *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong* by James W. Loewen as a sort of alternate history reference. Leeper added *Alternate*

Generals edited by Harry Turtledove.

Walton discussed why she wrote *Farthing*. James recommended *Years of Rice and Salt* by Kim Stanley Robinson. James claimed that stories in which Rome never fell are never good, but Walton thought the "Romanitas" trilogy by Sophia McDougall was a counter-example.

Aronson suggested the Dakota uprising in 1862 as a good point of divergence.

Leeper said a couple of her favorites were "The House of Sorrows" by Poul Anderson and "Counting Potsherds" by Harry Turtledove, because they go back to ancient times rather than relying on relatively recent events. In terms of implausibilities, the retreat of the Mongols from Europe after Ogedai's death in 1241 would qualify.

Walton thought that one could see Alexander continuing east and discovering armies that used the crossbow before it was known in Europe. She talked about the alternate history aspects of *The King's Speech*, and *The Gathering Storm* by Winston Churchill.

Leeper suggested that Churchill's leadership during World War II was an implausibility, given his previous history. Similarly, Abraham Lincoln and Ulysses S. Grant were two other historical figures who almost magically "pulled it together" and achieved results far beyond what anyone would have predicted.

James said that *The Children's Book* by A. S. Byatt is a sort of alternate history, mixing real and fictional characters. And Aronson cited *Greenlanders* by Jane Smiley. (Of course, by that logic, any historical novel or any novel that mentions real people would be an alternate history.)

Aronson said that one reason alternate history was a form of science fiction was that science fiction is about the possibility of change, which is the core of alternate history.

Walton mentioned that she did a spoof retrospective of *The Last Dangerous Visions* on April 1, 2010, which counts as another sort of alternate history.

Someone in the audience mentioned that Churchill had written an alternate history. Walton said that Churchill's gardener's son was the Alexander Fleming of penicillin fame.

Someone in the audience mentioned David Brin's comments on *The Separation* by Christopher Priest, but I have no idea what they were.

Two R. A. Lafferty stories were named: "Thus We Frustrate Charlemagne" and "Interurban Queen".

Drifting back to the panel's purported topic, Aronson suggested that the development of stirrups earlier than actually happened would be plausible and would also effect changes in history.

An audience member said that in *The Lost History of 1914* Jack Beatty suggests that World War I was an implausible event.

Oh, and of course at some point someone mentioned *Guns of the South* by Harry Turtledove--I do not think it is possible to have an alternate history panel without it.

Apollo 13: Teamwork and Problem Solving
Sunday, 12:00 Noon
Sy Liebergot

Description: "An application in problem solving and leadership dealing with problem solving

management using the Apollo 13 mission as an example. While more than 200,000 miles from Earth, a failure occurred that required the entire mission control and engineering teams to refocus their efforts from a lunar landing to saving the three astronauts who now faced the grim possibility that they might never return to earth."

Attendance: hundreds

Liebergot gave several talks about Apollo 13, which seemed to overlap each other somewhat.

Liebergot said that the material in his talks could also be found in his book, *Apollo EECOM: Journey of a Lifetime*.

He said that not everyone who supported the space program did it for space. Either Kennedy or Johnson (my notes do not say) said, "I don't care about space; all I care about is beating the Russians."

Liebergot repeated the well-known problem of long-term projects: it is impossible to guarantee funding past the term of office for the current elected officials.

Regarding the film *Apollo 13*, Liebergot said that Ron Howard took liberties. For example, Jack Swigert was in fact better-trained than Ken Mattingly, not the bumbler he was portrayed as in the movie. Tom Kelly of Grumman was depicted as resisting the use of the LEM for propulsion, but this was also inaccurate.

And Liebergot said that it was he, in fact, who actually ordered the stirring of the tanks. (He was played in the movie by Clint Howard.)

For those who love statistics, the explosion happened on April 13, 1970, at 2109 CST, 205,000 miles from earth, and the exact quote is, "Houston, we've had a problem."

NASA was very much in an "everything is under control" mode of operation, no matter what happened.

Liebergot said that, ironically, Apollo 13 made the most accurate landing. However, other sources cite the most accurate landings as Apollo 16, Gemini 9, and Apollo 17. According to one source, Apollo 13 landed 6.4 kilometers from the recovery ship, while the three other missions were all within 600 meters of their target.

In solving the Apollo 13 problem, the most important things to determine were the nature of the problem, the scope of the problem, the time constraints they were operating under, and the resources they had. (These the film did a good job of conveying. In particular, the scene in which a duplicate of everything in the Apollo is dumped on a table, with the instructions, "We've got to find a way to make *this* [square CSM LiOH canister] fit into the hole for *this* [round LEM canister] using nothing but *that*," conveys the resources better than just about anything else could have.)

Pretty much all the decisions were made within ten hours of the explosion--the rest of the time was mostly waiting and executing the plan. When they jettisoned the LEM, it had only ten hours of oxygen and thirteen hours of electricity left in it.

(At some point some young guy in the audience turned to someone else and regarding Liebergot asked, "Is that Walter Cronkite?")

This talk was cut short when someone came in to say the room had to be cleared because George R. R. Martin was scheduled in it next. Needless to say, this was incredibly rude.

Victorian and Edwardian Science Fiction
Sunday, 1:30 PM
Matthew Bennardo, David Malki (mod), Randy Smith

Description: "This panel will survey the high points of Victorian and Edwardian science fiction, highlighting both the well-known works that helped shape the genre and lesser-known curiosities. Different cultural and literary notions that helped shape that fiction will also be discussed."

Attendance: 60

Malki began by saying that science fiction does not have a long history. Bennardo said some think it does, though not by name, but by nature. Smith said that Blish called *Frankenstein* the first science fiction novel. In terms of "proto-science-fiction", there are the works of Cyrano de Bergerac, though they are more like fantasy. Science fiction, he said, involves extrapolation from the known science of the time.

Malki said that in *Frankenstein*, the doctor was the monster. (Actually, in the novel, he was not a doctor yet.) Smith said that it was not called science fiction, nor was William Hope Hodgson's "Carnacki" stories, such as "The Horse of the Invisible". (Someone in the audience suggested that the series "Rivals of Sherlock Holmes" was similar.) Bennardo added Arthur Reeve's "Craig Kennedy" stories, and an audience member added Sheridan LeFanu.

Smith said a lot of Victorian science fiction could be found in such volumes as Sam Moskowitz's *Science Fiction by Gaslight*. Malki and Smith agreed that the stories might not be typical, since they had to be chosen to be both readable and insightful.

Someone mentioned Jules Verne's *Paris in the Twentieth Century*, though obviously all Verne would qualify, if one extends "Victorian" outside of the British Empire. However, then the question of translations enters into it.

Bennardo named Rudyard Kipling's "With the Night Mail" and "As East as ABC" (though Kipling wrote several more science fiction stories as well). Smith talked about the science fiction of Jack London (a volume was published by Gregg Press back in 1975).

Bennardo then listed the best-known of the Victorian science fiction authors: H. G. Wells, Jules Verne, Edwin Abbott, Robert Louis Stevenson, Mark Twain, Edgar Allan Poe, Arthur Conan Doyle, Ignatius Donnelly.

At this point the panel (and audience) just started listing works:

- | *Looking Backward* by Edward Bellamy
- | Camille Flammarion's novels
- | *Herland* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman
- | *Angel of the Revolution* by George Griffith
- | H. Rider Haggard's novels
- | *Land of the Changing Sun* by William N. Harben
- | *Two Worlds* by Kurd Lasswitz
- | A. E. Merritt's novels
- | *The Last Man* by Mary Shelley
- | *Future Perfect*, edited by H. Bruce Franklin

Science Fiction in the Mainstream
Sunday, 4:30 PM
Beverly Friend (mod), John Kessel, Eddie Schneider, Sarah Stegall, Gary K Wolfe

Description: "Science Fiction and Fantasy have become increasingly popular in so-called 'mainstream' Literature/Writing. What are the best examples of this--what do they get right--what could we learn from them--and where do they go wrong?"

Attendance: 60

Again, we started with examples. Friend gave Jim Fergus's *One Thousand White Women: The Journal of May Dodd* and Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*. Are science fiction and the mainstream getting closer together or further apart?

Kessel thought they were definitely getting closer, especially since the New Wave, and says that James Patrick Kelly talks about "The Invasion of the English Majors." Wolfe mentioned *The Secret History of Science Fiction* edited by Kessel and Kelly, an anthology of science fiction stories which could probably be described as "sci-fi meets li-fi" (literary fiction). Wolfe dislikes the term "mainstream" (though he proposed no replacement). He added another example, Juno Diaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wilde*, and noted that Diaz, Michael Chabon, and Charles Yu (*How to Live Safely in a Science Fictional Universe*) accept their identification as science fiction writers, while Margaret Atwood (famously) does not. Friend said that Kurt Vonnegut and Michael Crichton also denied the label. Kessel claimed that Chabon is not really labeled as a science fiction writer. Schneider said that Kim Stanley Robinson was in both camps, and Stegall said that the younger generation seems to prefer not labeling authors.

Stegall said that a work such as Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* "transcends the genre." Later, Kessel pointed out that McCarthy spent no time on the disaster itself, leading Segall to suggest, "*The Road* is Roger Zelazny's *Damnation Alley* with the serial numbers filed off." Wolfe thought it was a follow-on to his *No Country for Old Men*.

Schneider said that Century Books and other imprints are trying to publish "slipstream" to both sides. On the other hand, some creative writing classes rule out genre writing as an option for student assignments. (This would rule out mysteries, romance, and westerns, as well as science fiction.)

Wolfe noted that the *New Yorker* did a science fiction issue in 2012.

Sometimes authors use different names when writing in different genres. Wolfe cited Iain Banks versus Iain M. Banks as a signal rather than an attempt to conceal identity. Harry Turtledove uses H. Turteltaub for his historical fiction. Stegall noted that J. D. Robb was Nora Roberts. Friend said that this is because a writer has an audience who wants "more of the same," so writing in a different field is a risk.

Friend said that dystopias are more mainstream than other science fiction sub-genres. Kessel said that literary writers ignore the technical aspects (such as the McCarthy example he gave earlier), and described it as "mainstream is putting on science fiction clothes." Wolfe said that "dystopian" and "magical realism" are terms used to avoid calling something science fiction.

Why are some authors so adamantly science fiction writers? Schneider thought it was owning your own identity. Friend suggested it was because science fiction has a community. (Segall and Schneider noted that romance and mystery writers also have communities.)

Someone in the audience said that the terms "utopian" and "magic realism" derive from sources outside of science fiction.

Kessel and Wolfe contrasted the attitudes of Michael Chabon and Philip Roth. Both wrote alternate history novels. Chabon recognized his was part of a developed sub-genre of science fiction. Roth claimed he had invented a new genre that no one had written in before.

Schneider said that David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* was written in sections, each in a different genre.

Someone observed that the use of qualifiers such as "dystopian" or "magic realism" was not unique to science fiction: even rock music has qualifiers now.

Wolfe said that there are reasons why authors may prefer one label or another. For short fiction, science fiction pays better. And for novels, science fiction has a floor, a minimum that it can be expected to earn. On the other hand, MFAs have one novel reviewed by the *New York Times* and then end up teaching and trying to write their second novel.

Kessel said, "Kids are now steeped in science fiction" (and fantasy, whereas our generation tended to hide it. Segall said that there was a strain of anti-intellectualism today, and Wolfe said that apocalypticism works both ways. Kessel said, "Many want to go back to a vision of 1955 which doesn't really exist."

Wolfe named several stories that seem mainstream now in their predictions of events. Fredric Brown's "The Lights in the Sky Are Stars" foresaw the abandonment of space travel. Lester del Rey's "A Logic Named Joe" presaged the Internet. The President in *Stand on Zanzibar* was name Obomi.

Someone in the audience said that another example of mainstream science fiction would be Haruki Murakami's *IQ84*. Kessel added Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*.

Schneider suggested that mainstream science fiction had, for example, no robots. (This sounds like a reworking of Margaret Atwood's comments about "talking squids in outer space.")

All this reminded me of someone saying she never like any science fiction movies. When we pointed out that she liked *Cocoon*, she said, "But that's not science fiction!" To which I could only respond, "Aliens come from outer space and give us immortality--and that's *not* science fiction?"

[If there are going to be new genres and sub-genres, please direct me to the "10%" section of the bookstore (a la Sturgeon).]

Wolfe said that elsewhere there was less distinction between science fiction and literary fiction.

Segall asked if cyberpunk was not making in-roads into the mainstream. Kessel said that it fit in well with post-modernism. Wolfe said there was also steampunk, but the fiction aspect is ignored in both, and they are more visual artforms than literary ones.

Other recommendations for "science fiction sensibility" in the mainstream:

- | "Tom's A-Cold" (a.k.a. "Full Circle") by John Collier
- | *Limbo* by Bernard Wolfe
- | *Against the Day* by Thomas Pynchon
- | *The Disappearance* by Philip Wylie
- | *Mockingbird* by Walter Tevis
- | *The Hearing Trumpet* by Leonora Carrington
- | *The Preservationist* by David Main
- | *White Lotus* by John Hersey
- | Chris Rasmussen
- | Brian Evanson
- | *Mirage* by Matt Ruff
- | *Giles Goat Boy* by John Barth
- | *Information Is Beautiful* by David McCandless

Kessel said that all this may suggest that science fiction as a separate genre may be disappearing, and

Wolfe agreed with that. Segall said it was becoming "less a handle on a suitcase and more like a teabag in hot water." Schneider said that he was "interested to see how it will play out." In any case, he thought it would at least do more for a dialogue across genres.

What Is Science Fiction?
Sunday, 6:00 PM
Deirdre Crimmins, Leonard Krol, Mark Leeper, Chris Mirell

Description: "STAR WARS is not Science Fiction! Are rocket ships and ray guns all you need to call it Science Fiction or is more needed?"

Attendance: 30

Krol said that he suggested the topic. *Star Wars*, he said, is not science fiction because there is no science hero, and that is why it is popular. "Star Trek" is science fiction; *Star Wars* is adventure. Crimmins said that *Gattaca* is quintessential science fiction. Krol agreed, saying a work is science fiction if it shows the effect of science (technology) on society.

Crimmins said that *The Fifth Element* was another example of science fiction.

Mirell said that *Star Wars* is science fiction with elements of fantasy. "*Star Wars* is space opera in its grandest tradition ... fiction that explores the imagined impact of theoretical science." But what about such tropes as dystopias and zombies?

Leeper said that there was a "spectrum of plausibility." Also, alternate history is considered science fiction. Science fiction is more plausible than fantasy, but less than reality. (Yesterday it was fantasy, today it's science fiction, tomorrow it's reality.)

Mirell said that in his science fiction course, half of the students expect Harry Potter, *Twilight*, *The Lord of the Rings*, fantasy, or just *Star Wars*. But it is not losing popularity, partly because it has something like *The Hunger Games* as a "gateway drug." People are familiar with films such as *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, *The Thing from Another World*, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, *Forbidden Planet*, the "Star Wars" trilogy, and *Iron Giant*. (I'm not sure why *Star Wars* is included if it is not really science fiction.)

Someone in the audience said that unexplainable technology is fantasy. (I think that is basically Clarke's Third Law.) Someone else asked where this definition was useful. Someone else noted that in *A Clockwork Orange* there are no science fiction tropes.

One person said that science fiction was between the fantastic and reality. Another said that science fiction was fantastical by non-supernatural. A third said it was not so much a genre as a milieu. Yet another described it as a plausible extrapolation from the world as we know it. It was suggested that these definitions would seem to exclude alternate histories and the multiverse.

Someone said they preferred the terms "speculative fiction" or "future fiction".

Someone mentioned *Multiplicity* as something not quite science fiction. (Maybe *Cocoon* is also.)

Leeper said that *Godzilla* is science fiction, *Mothra* is fantasy. *Frankenstein* is science fiction, *Dracula* is fantasy. The distinction is between the preternatural and the supernatural.

Mirell said that there are real science fiction books that have been made into movies: Orson Scott Card's *Ender's Game*, Robert A. Heinlein's *Starship Troopers*, Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (*Bladerunner*, Michael Crichton's *Sphere*, and Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend* (*Last Man on Earth*, *The Omega Man*, and *Last Man on Earth*).

All this reminded me that science fiction was originally supposed to teach science, at least according to Hugo Gernsback, but it has since been repurposed. Leeper asked whether a story about eating lunch tomorrow was science fiction because it takes place in the future.

Hugo Awards
Sunday, 8:00 PM

Attendance: 1900 [out of a warm body count of 5169]

And the results were:

- | NOVEL: *Among Others* by Jo Walton (Tor)
- | NOVELLA: "The Man Who Bridged the Mist" by Kij Johnson (*Asimov's*, September/October 2011)
- | NOVELETTE: "Six Months, Three Days" by Charlie Jane Anders (Tor.com)
- | SHORT STORY: "The Paper Menagerie" by Ken Liu (, March/April 2011)
- | RELATED WORK: *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction, Third Edition* edited by John Clute, David Langford, Peter Nicholls, and Graham Sleight (Gollancz)
- | GRAPHIC STORY; *Digger* by Ursula Vernon (Sofawolf Press)
- | DRAMATIC PRESENTATION, LONG FORM: *Game of Thrones (Season 1)* (HBO)
- | DRAMATIC PRESENTATION, SHORT FORM: "The Doctor's Wife" (*Doctor Who*) (BBC Wales)
- | EDITOR, SHORT FORM: Sheila Williams
- | EDITOR, LONG FORM: Betsy Wollheim
- | PROFESSIONAL ARTIST: John Picacio
- | SEMIPROZINE: *Locus*, edited by Liza Groen Trombi, Kirsten Gong-Wong, et al.
- | FANZINE: *SF Signal*, edited by John DeNardo
- | FAN WRITER: Jim C. Hines
- | FAN ARTIST: Maurine Starkey
- | FANCAST: "SF Squeecast", Lynne M. Thomas, Seanan McGuire, Paul Cornell, Elizabeth Bear, and Catherynne M. Valente
- | JOHN W. CAMPBELL AWARD FOR BEST NEW WRITER: E. Lily Yu

The ceremony was supposed to be streamed live, but when the provider's bots detected excerpts of copyrighted dramatic presentations they cut the feed and could not be contacted in time to restore it for the rest of the ceremony. (Permission had in fact been obtained for all the film and video clips.) The fact that it happened during Neil Gaiman's presentation resulted in it making several national news feeds, which gave the Hugos more publicity than the feed itself would have.

String Theory for Dummies
Monday, 10:30 AM
Laurel Anne Hill, Harry Kloor, G. David Nordley (m), Andrew Zimmerman-Jones

Description: "String Theory 1-A for those who struggle with physics."

Attendance: 200

There was a hand-out; it was (is?) <http://laurelannahill.com>.

Zimmerman-Jones wrote *String Theory for Dummies*. Hill wrote *The Little Book of String Theory*.

Nordley asked how many in the audience believed in string theory; about a quarter raised their hands.

Kloor said the study of string theory was phenomenology. The "Standard Model" brings together the strong, weak, and electromagnetic forces in three-dimensional space, but string theory has other

dimensions that are tiny.

Nordley said that particles want to be 0-dimensional points, but if a particle has a mass, this is a problem. If a particle is a loop or string, however, this spreads the mass out.

Hill said that one problem with string theory is that it is untestable and unobservable; it is all math-derived. Zimmerman-Jones added that the math came from particle physics.

[It was at this point that I concluded that I came in as a dummy, and would leave as a dummy. For starters, one of the panelists talked about "Planck length", not a term to use with dummies. But I will press valiantly on]

Someone asked why physicists wanted to unify everything. Hill said that currently it is not unified: gravity is for big things, while the strong, weak, and electromagnetic forces are for little things. And it just would be nice to unify it all.

Someone else asked how a dimension (as a degree of freedom) have a size? The panelists recommended "Superstrings: String-Theory Tutorial" on-line has having the answer to this and other questions.

Kloor noted again that string theory is not currently falsifiable (since it is not testable). He said "why" is a model, not just equations, and that gravity is *why* things fall (but that really does not explain *how* gravity does it, or *why* gravity exists). Nordley disagree with Kloor, saying that models describe *how*, not *why*.

Zimmerman-Jones suggested that if the Large Hadron Collider found super-symmetric particles, that would be consistent with string theory, but Hill added that that would not prove anything.

Kloor said there could be experiments in the future for support or falsifiability of string theory, but they are not possible now.

Someone in the audience asked, "Doesn't dark matter/energy throw a spanner in the Standard Model, and allow or require a fifth force?"

Nordley said that during the Big Bang, things did not move faster than light, but rather that space appeared between them. (This sounds like a story idea to me: people create space to create faster-than-light drives, but it screws up the universe.)

Monday Feedback Session
Monday, 12:00 Noon
Dave McCarty

Description: "Tell us what you think we should know about the convention."

Attendance: 20

[Some of this I have already said in my introductory comments, but will repeat here in case someone wants to excerpt this section.]

The "fake panel" track came in for heavy criticism, especially from the mobility-impaired who had to exert a lot of energy to get anywhere, and were not pleased to find at the end they had been the victims of a hoax.

I didn't wander the corridors (much), but I did wonder, "Is Stagg Field the same as Field? Or maybe

Soldiers Field?" (Given that there were also both Columbia and Columbus rooms, is this so unlikely?) The result was that by the time I realized the item in question was fake (when I finally asked someone), it was too late to go to another item instead. I was not the only person at the Gripe Session who complained about this, but all we got was an explanation of how this was a Chicago tradition. Sorry, what may be okay for a convention of a few hundred, most of whom are in on the joke, is *not* appropriate for a convention of 5000, most of whom have been lost in the convention center multiple times already. (Not to mention at least one person complaining said that their friend from Chicago knew nothing about this tradition either.)

What was even more annoying, though, was the apparently standard response from the convention committee members, which seemed to be (as one person indicated), "Oh, that was humor and you should have gotten it."

I'll add that it was really annoying to hear a lot of complaints (and some praise) at the Gripe Session and see the Con Chair taking no notes whatsoever on them. Even if his memory rivals that of Funes the Memorious he should at least *appear* to be taking notes! And then he left early because of a meeting, and although someone else stayed (and did take notes), it is really impolite to tell the people at a gripe session that, sorry, I can't listen to you because I have to go somewhere else.

Various other comments:

- | There was no television feed to rooms (a budget issue).
- | There was no free WiFi in rooms (again, the cost was prohibitive).
- | Chi Kidz was "awesome."
- | The programming on Monday was very thin, without much for fans.
- | There were a lot of apparently duplicate panels.
- | There were no showings of the nominees for Best Dramatic Presentation (again, a cost issue, and not something that has been well-attended in the past). The new trend is to show more anime and short films that are not available elsewhere.
- | The Chicon app for the iPad was good, the one for the iPhone not so much. (It was supposedly the same app as in Reno, but now also working offline.) However, someone said that asking for programming change in the app never loaded anything.
- | Everyone was helpful.
- | There was good signage.
- | A new fan thought that the time spent at the Business Meeting debating whether Yngvi was a louse was a waste of time.
- | There were no good views of the Hugos.
- | There were two rooms that were inaccessible to wheelchairs. It was claimed they had to be used anyway. (But did they really need *that* many tracks?)
- | The hotel handled the elevators well (as opposed to the 1991 "elevator riots").
- | The changes for the 9 AM panels need to be listed on the previous day's pink sheets as well.
- | People liked the ninety-minute slots.

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