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Fan Futures—Beyond the Archive: Papers from the FanLIS 2022 Symposium

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Fans (and fan studies) have always been interested in their past, and in telling the story of their past.

In his editorial for science fiction magazine *If* (In Fandom) in July 1967, Lin Carter evidences one of the earliest interactions of fans with the information communication chain, although it was not recognised as such at the time.

Science fiction is arguably the primordial soup from which fandom emerged as a meaningful, contributory force for documenting the record, or overlapping with library and information science (LIS). Science fiction attracted not just readers, but fans. Carter writes that some of these fans became, collectors, authors, editors and publishers of science fiction works, in contrast to readers of other genres:

There are lots of folks who read, say, mysteries, or historicals, or westerns. But who would think of *collecting* them?

...there definitely is a very strong and ever-present tendency for science-fiction *readers* to become science-fiction *writers*.

Fandom is proving ground from which the professionals of tomorrow are (as it were) launched.

Lots of science-fiction fans edited magazines or paperbacks...

and in contrast to writers of other types of works:

...unlike the writers who from time to time stray into the field and try to make a success of it without really knowing or caring much for science fiction as literature.

Although the phraseology of this editorial may seem anachronistic when encountered in the 21st century, these early ideas are clearly related to our quest to understand links between fandom and LIS, and their origins. Indeed, Carter concludes that the passion and engagement of science fiction fans “works to constantly *improve* the field (most editors are just ‘doing a job,’ but ex-fans working in sf as editors and publishers have a sense of dedication). ... A truly surprising number of the best and most famed science-fiction writers of all time are ex-fans” (Carter, 1967, p. 96).

One of the main contemporary arenas through which fandom and LIS have come to talk to one another is through the archive. It’s natural that the archive should loom large in this endeavour. For the past 15 years or so at least, the archive—both physical and digital—has been a site of great interest and exploration for fan studies—see, for example Versaphile (2011), Lothian (2012) and Jansen (2020). Thus far, the only place where fans, fan studies and LIS have come to genuinely talk to one another, to collaborate with one another, is in the archive. For example, the archivist Jeremy Brett (2013) has long been a champion of preserving fan culture through his work with fanzines. Abigail De Kosnik’s (2016) model of ‘archontic production’—where fanworks are part of a dynamic, ever-growing archive that accrues around a source text—puts the concept of the archive front and centre of the fan experience. And of course, as fans, we are all in some way archivists and collectors—Lincoln Geraghty, in his seminal book *Cult Collectors* (2014), highlights how creating our own fan collections, our own

fan histories, is a way of establishing and expressing our own fannish identities. Last but not least, the latest issue of *Transformative Works and Cultures*—a special issue on Fan Histories—has many excellent papers on the fan archive and how they are both made by—and make—fandom itself.

Thus, we see that fandom’s relationship with the archive has been a long and fruitful one, yet one that has rarely, unfortunately, been acknowledged within LIS. Our goal is to bring an awareness to those in the information professions of the important and often innovative practice being developed by fans in both analogue and digital spheres. But we also want to push beyond the concept of the archive as the only space for fandom and LIS to join forces. What does the future hold for the coming together of the two disciplines? In what other ways do our interests find common ground?

Following the first successful FanLIS symposium (Price & Robinson, 2022), our aim in 2022 was to continue to build bridges between the two fields, doing this through two streams held over the two-day event—the first stream being ‘Beyond the Archive’, and the second ‘Fan Futures’. ‘Beyond the Archive’ focused on the ways in which fans move beyond traditional relationships with the archive to subvert, use and perhaps even abuse the archive to create and innovate. ‘Fan Futures’ then zoomed out from the archive to consider different aspects of the information communication chain—creation, organisation, dissemination, discovery, management, preservation, analysis, use and understanding—traditional domains of concern to LIS—and how fan practice is changing and innovating in those areas.

From the first stream, we present Susrita Das’s paper about how BTS fans curate and archive Twitter threads, maintaining them as sites of fan memory and interpersonal discourse; Jincui Jiang’s discussion on archiving as instrumental in the fan-subbing process; and Nicole Neece’s exploration of how archival maintenance affects the legacy of the X-Files fandom.

From the second stream, both Naomi Jacobs and JSA Lowe, and Shira Buchsbaum and Kimberly Kennedy’s papers will introduce the recently popular fannish practice of fanbinding, where digital fanfiction is instantiated in book form. Mikael Gyhagen’s work then looks at the importance of metadata, focusing on the bookmarking practices of readers on the fanfiction repository, Archive of Our Own (AO3). And lastly, Qiuyan Guo discusses the information communication chain amongst Chinese fans of musical actors, Ayunga and Zheng Yunlong, on Twitter.

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