OPUNTIA

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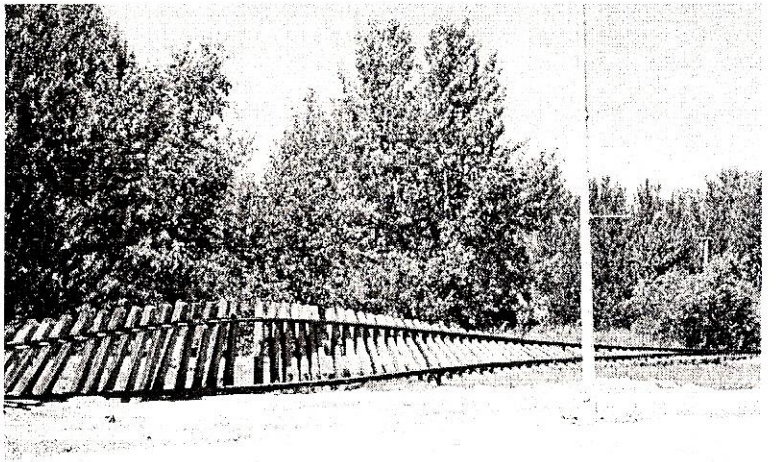
THE GREAT FLOOD OF 2013: THE LAND DRIES OUT

by Dale Speirs

I've been driving around southwestern Alberta doing research on my postal history of the province and not so incidently have been taking photos of the flood damage. Far too many photos to publish but here are a few. Below are the railroad tracks in High River, twisted like a corkscrew. On the next two pages are before and after photos of one of my favourite hiking places in the Rocky Mountains, Grotto Canyon Creek, taken where it empties out of the canyon into the Bow River valley near Canmore.



Grotto Creek, 2010

Grotto Creek, 2013

Inside Calgary there were three pedestrian suspension bridges like this over the Elbow River.

Floating debris piled up against the decks five metres above normal water level and tore the bridges apart.

The bridges were 75 years old and had always been high and dry above previous floods.

COWTOWN'S READERCON: HIGH AND DRY

by Dale Speirs

The third annual edition of When Words Collide, Calgary's literary convention that cross-pollinates SF, fantasy, mystery, and romance genres, was held August 9 to 11, 2013. Please note the spelling; Words, not Worlds. It moved to the Carriage House Inn, which has hosted SF conventions from time to time in previous years, as well as stamp shows (which I was involved in). The venue is on Macleod Trail, the main drag through southern Calgary, with lots of buses passing by, free parking, and convenient to reach. The hotel is on the plateau, nowhere near the flood zone.

Rather than report in chronological order, I'll sort things by theme. The vast majority of convention reports published elsewhere are along the lines of "And then I met ... ", "Then we ate ...", and "The hotel messed up my reservation and it's all the concom's fault". This is why I only cover panels and events. You don't want to read that I had the roast beef anymore than I want to read that you met Joe and Sally Smith and talked in the bar.

A woman who regularly publishes convention reports in one of the zines I read and who is a dealer, constantly writes about loading dock troubles and why it's the concom's fault the hotel didn't supply free trolleys. Another writer goes into details about the food at Denny's but never mentions the panels. The majority of convention reports are actually hotel or fast-food reviews.

The Dealer Bourse at WWC was of good quality. There was one book store, three writers groups, and the rest were small-press publishers. It is astonishing the great flood of print-on-demand books coming out nowadays. While e-books will certainly kill most paper editions, for now POD books are still viable.

Guest Of Honour Speeches.

The GoH speeches were well done and generally funny, the best batch overall that I've heard since I attended my first SF convention mumble-mumble years ago. Patricia Briggs started off by discussing the value of fiction. After 9/11, she felt useless compared to the first-responders but soon realized that writers could help educate people in a way that superficial mass-media coverage did not. She heard many of her fellow denizens of Washington State talking about towel-heads after the attack and lumping all Arabs together. As a fantasy novel writer, she felt that by writing about fictional cultures she can explore issues that would get her into physical danger if she mentioned them in a tavern.

Michael Cassutt said he never had any guidance about writing SF novels. When he looked back on his career,

he was amazed at how far he'd come. As a young man in the 1960s, he decided against a career in astronomy on the grounds that the space industry would fizzle out, and thus missed out on working on all the robot probes. That goes to show, he said, how good SF writers are at predicting the future.

Shirlee Smith Matheson had the funniest talk as she recounted her life growing up in a series of remote Alberta towns. As a young girl she became interested in writing mystery novels and decided to get material by spying on her neighbours. In adult life, her reputation as a novelist preceded her, and villagers often ask her to write birthday poems or eulogies for them. One day a man showed up on her doorstep and asked her to write a letter for him. When queried as to the subject, he said it was a confession to the Mounties for killing his brother. She asked when he had killed him, and he replied he hadn't just yet. Why kill him? "Because he's being a jerk", he replied. She suggested her fee was too expensive and it might be cheaper just to go over to the RCMP station and confess in person in advance. He thought it over, agreed it was a good idea, and went off. As soon as he was gone, she phoned his brother and advised him that he'd better get out of town in a hurry.

Jamis Paulson is a small-press publisher who actually earns his living from it. He said that the modern changes in publishing are exciting and help small presses get a leg up on the big outfits in New York. E-books and print-on-demand make it easier to publish, but the great problem he had was finding quality material. He likened it to panning for gold, trying to find a nugget in all the black sand. One essential component to online publishing is that the social networking media are essential in the absence of big advertising budgets. He reminded authors in the audience that publishers are not necessarily on the dark side; both authors and publishers want the same thing, to publish books.

Barbara Fradkin retired from her career as a child psychologist and became a novelist. Psychologists can never vent their true feelings toward their patients, so she started writing murder mysteries to work off her frustrations. Her series of academic mysteries was based on her experiences while working for her doctorate.

The last speaker was D.B. Jackson, who writes under that name and also as David B. Coe, and had both names on the placard identifying him at the dais. The moderator introduced him: "*We only have two speakers left.*" It took the audience a couple of seconds to get the joke. He/they said a writer should not write fiction for the market but write stories you love and are bursting to tell. If your story is any good, you will find the market for it somewhere.

Crime.

"Undercover Cop: A Gemini Life" was a presentation by Calgary Police Service Detective Sweet about how an undercover officer works. He said for obvious reasons he couldn't go into detail about undercover methods. Television shows often have unrealistic cops but he said they usually get the criminals accurate. The Supreme Court of Canada has established rules that allow undercover agents to lie or cheat under certain boundaries. Police can't send in fake barristers to represent an arrested criminal, and they cannot entice someone to commit a crime. One SCC judge remarked that dealing with crime is not a game played by Marquis of Queensberry rules.

Agents have to learn how to bluff their way out of bad situations and to buy drugs as a convincing addict. If the agent is new on the street, drug dealers want to know their story. Hands have to be callused if you claim to be a street person. Agents dip two fingers and a thumb into yellow food colouring to simulate nicotine stains. Underworld slang keeps changing rapidly, and television shows are usually several years behind. Sweet occasionally had to make a drug buy just to find out what a dealer was talking about. Agents always set up an exit where they can walk away from a drug deal if the pusher becomes suspicious. This often causes the dealer to change his mind and follow after the agent begging to make the sale.

"Blood And Guts" was a presentation by Dwayne Clayden, who started out as a Calgary police constable and later became a paramedic for three decades. He has published four textbooks for paramedics and writes police procedurals. The audience was largely mystery writers. The opening slide had a warning "Persons under 14 must be accompanied by their mommy" and for good reason, as most of the slides were photos of abruptly-deceased people, whether by accident or murder. Clayden showed the effects of bullets and knives in real-life (or real-death) situations. He mentioned that first-responders use a lot of black humour to help them deal with such ghastly situations.

The worst place to be hit by a bullet or knife blade is the brain stem. People have survived with fragments or bullets in the brain or heart, not often granted, but almost never if to the brain stem. In falls or traffic accidents, people may have their bones or skin protected by safety equipment or seat belts. The problem is that internal organs obey Newton's law of inertia, and a 100-kph impact into a wall or the ground means that all the organs will slam forward and hit the ribs at that speed. Clayden showed photos of traffic victims whose bowels were popped out of the body on impact or the eyes popped out. Seat belts do save lives; photos showed victims with heads flattened by impact with the front windshield.

Bullets make a small hole going in and a big one coming out. If there is a star pattern of cuts around an incoming hole, it means the gun was pressed against the victim when the trigger was pulled because the exhaust gases exiting the barrel at supersonic speed cut like a knife.

Clayden showed gunshot statistics for different types of firearms. Shotguns are the highest cause of death, but handguns are the most common type of shooting. The reason is that bullets generally have to hit on or very near the vital organs or arteries, which are concentrated along the spinal cord, whereas shotgun pellets spread out and have a better chance of hitting something. It is difficult to hit a moving target with a handgun, and wounds are usually to the side of the body such that the victim can survive them. Victims do not fly backward when hit by a bullet, an old Hollywood fallacy. Bullets do not have enough momentum to knock a man off his feet.

Knife wounds are a challenge for paramedics since rarely will the knife still be in the wound, and it is difficult to estimate the depth of injuries. Clayden mentioned that a popular rule among first-responders is that there is no limit to human stupidity. He showed photos of Darwin Award nominees from Calgary, such as the drunk who tried to smoke a large firecracker and blew off the front of his face.

"Have Gun Will Murder" looked at westerns, with novelists Sharon Wildwind and Jacqueline Guest. Wildwind noted that there were 26 prime-time westerns on television in 1958 and none in 1968. The Old West wasn't as lawless as people think. In Canada, the Mounties arrived on the prairies before the settlers. In the USA, almost every western town had vigilante committees and by-laws requiring guns to be locked up immediately upon entering town limits.

Guest then went into a rant about the Metis being displaced by settlers, which was true in certain areas of Manitoba and Saskatchewan. She overstated the case though, implying that all of the prairies were Metis territory before 1869 (the native tribes will tell her differently), but since she is a Metis herself, her diatribe was understandable. She complained that when she wrote an historical novel about Metis, one of the elders said she wasn't a true Metis because she didn't speak French, so that seems like turnabout is fairplay.

Wildwind pulled the panel back on track again by discussing the history of western novels, first appearing in the 1830s but flowering in the late 1800s. The first western movie was "The Great Train Robbery" in 1903. By the 1930s, western movies were produced by B studios, and written fiction went into pulps.

Guest said that westerns were to previous generations what dystopian novels are today. Cost helped kill western movies; horses cost $100 per day to rent back in the 1950s, bigger money than now. Parents objected to the violence and campaigned against the studios. The greatest change was that westerns were morality plays, and by the 1960s the younger generation decided that moral values were relative, not absolute.

The worst western movie ever produced was "Saskatchewan", filmed in 1954 in Banff National Park. For the geographically illiterate, Saskatchewan has no mountains. Not for nothing are its citizens called flatlanders.

Traditional gunfighter written fiction is almost dead today because they never changed. Cowboy romances are now a popular sub-genre of romance. Currently there are about eleven series of novels with aboriginal detectives, all written by white folk.

Science.

"Quantum Everything" was a whiteboard talk by Dr. Christoph Simon, a particle physicist at the University of Calgary. He talked about superposition, entanglement, Schrodinger's Cat, and the many-worlds theory (parallel universes). All of these are actually variations on a theme arising from sub-atomic particles which end up in two places at once while zipping through or bouncing off mirrors or slits. He said that quantum physics can be understood but not explained why it exists.

"And Open The Mouth Of Hell" was a presentation by Edward Wilson, a pipeline engineer whose hobby is constructing a computer model for supervolcanoes. Krakatoa ejected 10 km^3 of ash into the atmosphere, while supervolcanoes eject 1,000 km^3 into the air. The Toba supervolcano which erupted in Indonesia 76,000 years ago almost wiped out humans, reducing their population down to about 50,000 in east Africa and temporarily eliminating them from southeast Asia.

Wilson's model indicates the greatest threat by a supervolcano is the one near Naples, Italy, which could kill tens of millions of people in the western Mediterranean in a few hours and several billion over the next few months as ash blankets the sky and kills the crops. The timing affects the magnitude. If it happens just after the harvest, then the death rate will still be in hundreds of millions, but will be much higher if the explosion comes a month before the harvest when food stocks are low. The human race will not be as badly affected as with Toba because we will have a few months or a few years warning that the magma is coming up. With technical resources and an ability to know what is going on compared to our distant ancestors, civilization will be badly damaged but not destroyed.

Mysteries.

"We Are All Murderers" began with novelist Barbara Fradkin saying that the key to creating a believable non-psycho murderer is providing a good motive. Janice MacDonald said she doesn't get to motive until after 300 pages of her novels because it tends to give away the plot. She likes to exercise her imagination every time she goes into a building or house by speculating where she could hide a body. Melodie Campbell begged to differ, saying that supplying a motive keeps people staying with the book. She lays out motives for several characters to keep her readers guessing. Fradkin said that the difference between mystery and suspense/thriller novels is that in mysteries the crime happens first, while in suspense novels the hero races to prevent the crime.

"Eve Of Destruction" had six female novelists discussing women sleuths. Kay Stewart said not all readers like strong female characters, including some women she's talked to. There was a debate between S.G. Wong and Campbell about whether strong females are best written about in first or third person singular. Campbell said the main problem with first-person is that the character must be in every scene. Wong prefers to write her detectives in third-person to allow other character's thought processes to be transcribed. MacDonald said men have trouble writing female characters, especially when surrounded by men in rough country or who are warrior queens. Menstruation is often

ignored where, as in one example she cited, a female spy lived on the run in a forest for several months. Campbell used to be a hospital administrator before becoming a full-time writer. She said that what angered her about the CSI series was not just the well-known error of them getting test results back from the lab in four hours instead of a week, but the female CSI investigators constantly tottering around crime scenes in spike heels and/or short dresses.

"Each Generation's Sherlock Holmes" was a presentation by Charles Prepolec and Jeff Campbell on how the image of Sherlock Holmes has changed from one generation to the next. Actor William Gillette defined the look of Holmes for thousands of theatre audiences in the days before movies. Many actors played Holmes in silent movies and early talkies, but Basil Rathbone was the first "great". The generation of the 1930s and 1940s thought of Holmes in terms of the movies, not the books. The movies were often updated to contemporary times the same way that James Bond movies are. Literary Holmes fans think of him as part of the gaslight era, but Doyle wrote the stories as contemporary fiction, not period pieces. There have been lots of television shows but none of the Holmes' stand out.

"A Good Place To Die" was a discussion about settings for mystery stories. Kay Stewart was inspired to write one story after attending a performance of THE MIKADO in a small Alberta

prairie town. She wondered what if the actor waving the sword went berserk. She changed the location to a coastal island in British Columbia because it was easier to confine the characters and have a variety of people who couldn't escape. E.R. Brown was originally going to use a real small town for his first novel but decided to create a fictional one to give him flexibility in establishing the venue. If he used a real town, he would be harassed by nitpickers who knew the place. A fictional town can also be expanded in subsequent novels. Small town stories are also more manageable, with not as many buildings or crime sites to map out for the story.

Dwayne Clayden said Google Street View makes it easier to research how towns look but if setting a story in the past, one must be careful. He mentioned that when he was a young police constable in the 1970s, Tim Horton doughnut shops hadn't been invented yet, and field officers would congregate at restaurants who let them use the house phone for long calls not appropriate for the two-way radio. Today's authors who grew up with cellphones would not know this. S.G. Wong noted that accuracy in real-life settings is important because a mistake can yank the reader out of the story if they know the place. (This reminds me of a story I read where the author opened with a description of the setting sun at Calgary turning the Rocky Mountains golden. As any Calgarian can tell you, the mountains never glow golden. They are blue and grey in daylight, and because the sun sets behind them, they turn deep purple and finally a black silhouette at sunset.) Wong concluded the panel by saying that if you choose a place, love it, because you may be writing it for many books.

"Historical Whodunits" was more about historical research for novel writing than mysteries set in historical times. D.B. Jackson said research is all very well but it has to be properly blended into the fiction, rather than as infodumps. His novels are set in pre-revolutionary USA when the English spoken then was not the same as today. The problem is that it can't be completely authentic since it would be unreadable. One also has to watch for anachronistic words such as "okay", which were not used in the 1700s. Danielle Metcalfe-Chenail reads primary sources for her aviation novels (she comes from a family of pilots), but has to take liberties sometimes to make the narrative flow.

"A Priest, A Shaman, And A Rabbi Walk Into A Novel" was about a subject commonly mishandled or ignored completely in SF and fantasy stories, that of religion. Nola Sarina, a devout Catholic, works religious faith into her novels. She noted that the basic themes of the major religions are the same and only the practice and rituals vary. She is careful not to reveal too much religion all at once in her stories but to let it out bit by bit. In fiction, different religions allow for conflict between people who speak the same language.

Religion is often used as an excuse for wars because soldiers and citizens will fight for it, but the real reason is for gain by the top leaders. No one will fight just so the king can increase his wealth but many will die for God or Allah. The priests, however, are reluctant to start wars. True villains do not believe they are wrong, but believe their religion is the only true way. BABYLON 5 was mentioned as the SF show that handled religion the best.

Barb Galler-Smith said that humans are hard-wired to have faith and hope, so any fiction world-building must include religion. She felt the purpose of religion is to maintain the status quo, and since most people dislike change, it prevails.

Science Fiction.

"The Alien As Metaphor" looked at the well-known propensity of SF to use aliens, as discussed by three novelists and an editor. Candas Jane Dorsey started off by remarking that visible minorities have personal experience of being aliens in our society. She said it is easier for SF writers to do polemics with aliens because if set in our time and world, the reader's political or religious viewpoint would interfere with the actual reading of the story. A lot of SF uses aliens to confirm the author's world view. Peter Halasz said aliens are used most frequently to represent our fears. The panel discussed the example of the breakup of Yugoslavia after Tito's death, where the Serbs, Croats, and Muslims quickly demonized each other and became monsters to each other. Halasz identified good alien SF as that which seduces the reader into seeing things from a different point of view.

Lynda Williams said that aliens can't be too different because readers won't get them and editors will blue-pencil them. Nina Munteanu contradicted her by mentioning the novel SOLARIS which deals with a planet that was a single organism covered completely by an ocean of sentient organic soup. It was trying to communicate with humans by reflecting their memories back at them. The novel was made into a movie twice (one Russian, one American), both of which failed because theatre audiences couldn't understand the plot.

"Steampunk Art And Science Society" was a presentation by members of the society to introduce people to the subject. They defined it as a contemporary art movement mimicking Victorian SF. The field is a sub-genre of alternative history. Brass goggles are a cliche but are the most recognizable symbol of steampunk. Airships are not alternative history since they were in use in mundane life for decades. Steampunk depends on two divergences. The first is that Charles Babbage actually succeeded in building working mechanical computers which became ubiquitous and cheap. The second is that Nikola Tesla's inventions were successfully marketed.

"Apocalyptic Fiction" began with Craig DiLouie saying that it is the oldest type of written fiction and the most enduring from the Bible to now. Real disasters involve people and make them feel part of history, whether watching the fall of the Twin Towers on television or wading through the flood waters of Calgary. Modern apocalyptic fiction is popular because it allows the reader to imagine himself as a successful survivor. Trends change: alien invasions were popular in the 1950s and zombies in the 2000s.

DiLouie's wife was on the 87th floor of the North Tower when the first plane hit and managed to get out. She told him later that what scared her most was emerging into a dust-covered landscape of flattened emergency vehicles and seeing police and firefighters sobbing hysterically. He thought about that, and concluded that the apocalypse is genuinely upon us when authority vanishes and everyone is left struggling in their own little epicentre.

Tim Reynolds said he was online when the news was announced about Princess Diana's death. He watched the speed with which the news spread on the blogs, which convinced him that the Apocalypse will not be televised, it will be tweeted.

Dave Worsick, an historian of apocalyptic beliefs, said that the End Times can be environmental, biological, extraterrestrial, or psychological, and are always popular with cults because it gives the adherents a reason to stick together. Ancient cultures expanded their stories about local floods into versions such as Noah's flood. This comment triggered an extended discussion since most of the audience were Calgarians still recovering from the June flood. Several in the audience were either flooded or in a neighbourhood where the electricity and utilities were shut off as a precautionary measure. As a result, many Cowtowners did not know what was going on around them, and the apocalypse, as it were, concentrated itself around each isolated house. It wasn't so much the flood itself, but the loss of communications and the uncertainty that traumatized Calgarians. Without electricity, the Apocalypse will not be tweeted.

Fantasy.

"Making The Everyday Fantastic" had six novelists discussing what Nola Sarina referred to as integrated fantasy, which is a layer of fantasy hidden within normal society. Accidently walk into a hole-in-the-wall shop and find a witch behind the counter selling nostrums and crystals, that sort of thing. Jodi McIsaac is a young mum with two kids. She started writing fantasy because she couldn't find anything that wasn't teenage angst or warrior princesses. She asked herself what she would do if one of her children began exhibiting magical powers and she had to train her to keep them secret and not to abuse them.

Melodie Campbell wrote one novel about a housewife who discovers a time portal in the wall of her house and escapes to a kingdom with a handsome prince. The story was inspired when Campbell sat by her mother's deathbed and wished she could just walk through a wall into a happier place instead of watching her mother suffer a long slow death.

General Fiction.

"Cultural Appropriation" had a full room for a hot-button topic. The moderator was Calvin Jim, a Canadian-born Chinese who introduced the topic by saying the panel was not about cultural warfare but rather how writers can use other cultures to liven up their novels. He said there were three kinds of writers borrowing from other cultures. The invader barged in, used material from another culture as he saw fit, then went on to something else. The tourists were the majority of writers, who researched the culture, tried to use it accurately, and asked someone from that culture to look it over for any revisions. Guests were those who were invited in, did extended interviews, and consulted deeply with locals while writing the book. Jim said that no matter what an author does, there will always be someone looking for a fight. He cited an example of one of his stories set in China being attacked on Twitter by a woman who denounced him for cultural imperialism, unaware that "Jim" is a Chinese surname.

Gary Renshaw said he writes characters from other cultures not because of political correctness but because he wanted to have a realistic mix of cultures such as Canada has today. Steve Swanson said you really have to know an outside culture well to make such a character into a leading man/woman, while it is easier to use them as supporting characters who don't require detailed background and motives. E.R. Brown said that just to re-tell some other culture's myth or story will get you booed off the stage as a thief, but using outside characters to flavour a new story is okay. Reaction to the use of other cultures can cause a chilling effect among some authors who don't want to take abuse from self-appointed politically-correct vigilantes.

"History Of Humour" was a presentation by Melodie Campbell, who wrote for various stand-up comedians before getting into novels. Many studies confirm that humour helps maintain physical health. Humourists are observers, and most stand-up comedians were class clowns. (George Carlin explained it beautifully in his album of that name.) No one knows when humour began because it was passed down verbally before the invention of written languages. The stories were in rhyme because they were easier to memorize that way. Up to the 1700s, the word "comedy" only meant that the play or story had a happy ending, while a tragedy was one that had a bad ending for the characters.

Humour was more dangerous in the days of absolute rulers who didn't like being made fun of. Editorial cartoons developed in the early 1800s and operate on two levels, the initial laugh, then the second look and biting realization.

Most humour depends on your background and education. Campbell teaches a class in humour using Monty Python to illustrate the gaps in understanding of the modern generation. She cited an example where she played the Black Knight scene from the Holy Grail movie. The 20-somethings thought it was just gory but an older student from India laughed because she recognized the class warfare references. It works the other way too; Baby Boomers miss humourous references from 1940s movies.

"Getting Past The Middle Doldrums In Novel Writing" was standing-room-only in a large ballroom on a Sunday morning. Almost all the audience was wanna-be novelists, as determined by a show of hands when moderator Anna Bortolotto asked. The panelists dealt with what to do when the novel you're writing bogs down in the middle. Linda Kupecek started it off with a big laugh when she said she was there because she had that exact problem with her current novel and was hoping someone could help her. Fellow panelist Dave Duncan immediately replied: "Good luck with that!". D.B. Jackson said he uses several methods when he is blocked. He may work backward from the ending, introduce a new character, or shake by the hero by introducing a completely unexpected event. Another panelist used the Isaac Asimov method of having several projects on the go at once and when blocked, set it aside and do something else. Another alternative was to go back and re-read the story from the beginning to see where to go in a different direction.

"How To Survive In The New Publishing Reality" was actually a pitch for the Wattpad Website, designed for reading on mobile devices and which has 15 million users per month. Some major authors use the site, including Margaret Atwood, no friend of giant talking squids in space. Writers can post free short stories, novel extracts, Book #1 in a series, or serialize their fiction. They can use push notifications (currently about 9.5 million daily), and get feedback from serious readers. Paid books are available as print-on-demand or e-books, and some authors have had offers from Amazon or movie studios. All very interesting but a pitch session nonetheless. It is, however, a sample of the future.

General Observations.

Still lots of audience members taking notes at panels with pen and paper (myself included) because it is faster to write than to type. I noticed a new trend though, that of people sitting in the front row, holding tablets vertical on their laps and recording the panel with the video camera.

At a guess, I would say that about one-third of the convention membership were in their 20s and 30s, a very nice thing to see. We're not as grey as we think we are. Every novelist panelist had his or her books on display at the front edge of the table. This is an effect of the brave new world of e-books and POD books, where authors understand and accept that they have to promote themselves instead of sitting back and expecting a publisher to do it. Book tours don't cut it anymore.

All told, WWC 2013 was an excellent convention. The panelists were all well prepared and not trying to wing it, a bad habit at many pure-SF conventions I've been to. I think this is because few authors at WWC were the traditional type of SF novelist. Most were from other genres where they take such things more seriously. The mix of genres meant that almost all the names were unknown to me, but good on that, as it gave me a chance to hear something new.

Okay, I'll break the rule and tell one "And then I met" story to fill this last space. The hotel elevators broke down (the convention committee's fault, of course) and as I walked past them I saw Prof. Robert Runté intensely watching the floor number indicator. I couldn't resist stepping over to him and saying; "They don't go any faster no matter how hard you stare at the numbers". Runté moonlights as a publisher and spent most of WWC in small rooms hearing pitches from authors.

noticed by Dale Speirs

Heller, R., R. Barnes, and J. Leconte (2011) **Habitability of extrasolar planets and tidal spin evolution.** ORIGINS OF LIFE AND EVOLUTION OF BIOSPHERES 41:539–543

"*Stellar radiation has conservatively been used as the key constraint to planetary habitability. We review here the effects of tides, exerted by the host star on the planet, on the evolution of the planetary spin. Tides initially drive the rotation period and the orientation of the rotation axis into an equilibrium state but do not necessarily lead to synchronous rotation. As tides also circularize the orbit, eventually the rotation period does equal the orbital period and one hemisphere will be permanently irradiated by the star. Furthermore, the rotational axis will become perpendicular to the orbit, i.e. the planetary surface will not experience seasonal variations of the insolation.*"

Speirs: The rush to find habitable planets has concentrated on those within the habitable zone, not too close to the star so that they fry, and not too far away that they freeze. This paper points out there are also additional aspects to take into account, such as tidal forces locking a planet always facing one side to its star, producing an over-heated hemisphere on one side and an ice world on the other.