

The Devil's Work
Volume 1, Number 29
March, 1974

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80302 USA. This is intended for the May 74 FAPA mailing.

The Fantasy Amateur #146

Boggs: Entrusting a FAPA collection to a library is speculative folly. Entrusting preservation of anything to a library is folly. I've seen too many unsympathetic, unknowing, etc. librarians discard material, some of which seemingly was available nowhere else. The last I heard the Franklin Institute was looking for another home for the amateur journal collection since they no longer wish to be bothered. At least they didn't follow the lead of some other institutions and sell it for scrap paper. The courts have also ruled that libraries are not to be bound by conditions of acquisition, no one can specify that they have to keep the First Fandom Scrolls excavated from Shaver's Caves, if donated to the Miskatonic University Library.

From what I've seen (possibly not representative) the chances are greatly increased if the items are already complete and completely bound in library bindings. They seem to have more respect for the material in such a case and it only takes two seconds instead of only one to discard it.

Horizons #137 - Harry Warner, Jr.

The Science Fiction Book Club has also taken to advertising in The New York Times and in the other Doubleday book clubs. Apparently the results are better than by advertising in the sf magazines.

I think the quality of sf is a cyclical matter. Gernsback made sf worse. Tremaine and Campbell made it better. "Boucher" and Gold tried to make it worse, etc. I imagine there's quite a bit of good sf being written now, the problem is finding it. And with too many present writers (one is really too many) not interested in writing good sf the problem is compounded, though not insurmountable.

Celephais Feb 74 - Bill Evans

Wasn't William Sell's "Other Tracks", ASF Oct 38, the first story in which the alternate universes were created by the very act of time-traveling? In much earlier alternate-universe stories, such as James Stephens' In the Land Of Youth and Bennett's The Heads Of Cerberus the alternate universes merely were.

I'll grant you that Williamson did do different types of material for Wright than he was doing for the sf magazines. He himself said that he was attempting to imitate Merritt when he began, but Merritt was not a one-type-of-story author and the inspiration spread to encompass "The Metal Man" and Golden Blood, etc. I haven't read all of Williamson from WT, but of what I've read from there Golden Blood was by far the best and "Invaders Of the Ice World" was by far the worst. (It's weird how the last was ever published.)

Gernsback possibly did not discover Campbell. He was first published by Sloane after Gernsback's departure (though the story may have been accepted when Sloane was under Gernsback). Weinbaum was first published by Hornig under Gernsback on Wonder Stories,

but Gernsback must be given the credit of first publishing E. E. Smith, PhD.

I'll certainly agree with you that Sloane outedited Bates (mostly on inertia, I feel), Bates was innovating with crude pulp in sf (which brought a lot of reproach) rather than the mediocre pulp of Argosy's sf. And you're right, I can't recall enough memorable and good stories from the Bates Astounding to make me feel that it could have gone much of anywhere. Whereas with Sloane you always knew where things were going -- downhill all the way.

Thanks for pointing out the Jirel stories as examples of good sword & sorcery. After twenty years I can recall the sorcery, though I don't recall the swords. The two volumes that Gnome produced were a mixed bag in quality and sequence of events. (They also omitted stories which C. L. Moore didn't wish reprinted). I presume Greenberg presented them that way in hopes of averaging the quality so that both would sell.

But Mundy's Tros stories are neither fantasy nor sf, so why mention them as sword & sorcery?

The Ship Of Ishtar is flawed by its expansion from the novelette version. The pace, tenor and direction of the story shift for the worse. I wish Merritt had only published the first version and not let himself be persuaded to expand it.

One way of cutting down on the size of "sf" conventions (turning them from cons back into conventions) is to eliminate the non-fannish programming. I see no reason to send in money to support non-fannish programs and until a convention comes out and announces that it is being run for fans then I don't plan on sending in any further money. I'd be glad to support fans who wish to put on a fannish convention.