

A DECIMAL CLASSIFICATION OF FANTASTIC FICTION

By Samuel D. Russell

This is a proposed revision and extension of the "Decimal Classification of Fantasy Fiction" which Jack Speer advanced in the final issue of Spaceways (Sept. 1942). The purpose of such a system as this is to provide a logical, complete, and (we hope) generally accepted means of noting down the subject-matter of all science-fiction, weird fiction, and pure fantasy in both magazine and book form--a shorthand system of describing roughly what a given story is about. The classification would find its greatest use in bibliographies, book-lists, and story-indexes of various kinds and is more detailed and comprehensive than any now in use--perhaps too much so, you may think, but it seems better to include everything at the risk of complexity than to leave out a lot for the sake of mental laziness. Of course, many if not most stories would require two or more numbers for a complete description; they could be listed in order of importance or of time and separated by hyphens, like a social security number--e.g., "Things to Come" would be 23.3-24.1,2-25.2-33-11.1. The comma in the second number of the series indicates that both 24.1 and 24.2 are included,

*Detailed breakdown can be made by extending no. of decimal places. There are subdivisions which could be omitted if desired.*

- 00 NON-FICTION
- 01 Rockets and space flight
- 02 Astronomy
- 03 Physics and chemistry
- 04 Geology and paleontology
- 05 Biology and medicine
- 06 Lost and early civilizations
- 07 The future
- 08 The supernatural
  - 08.1 Satanism, demonology, witchcraft
  - 08.2 Vampirism and lycanthropy
  - 08.3 Mystic cults
  - 08.4 Ghosts
  - 08.5 Spiritualism
  - 08.6 Other psychic phenomena
  - 08.7 Supernormal faculties
  - 08.8 Folklore (fairies, gnomes)
- 10 EXTRATERRESTRIAL EVENTS & SETTINGS
- 11 Space flight
  - 11.1 First flights
  - 11.2 Interplanetary flight
  - 11.3 Interstellar & intergalactic
  - 11.4 Escape from earth's doom
  - 11.5 Space criminals & police
  - 11.6 Space war
  - 11.7 Breakdown of ship of space
- 12 Our solar system
  - 12.1 Mercury
  - 12.2 Venus
  - 12.3 The moon
  - 12.4 Mars
  - 12.5 The asteroids
  - 12.6 Jupiter and Saturn
  - 12.7 Satellites of Jupiter & Saturn
  - 12.8 The outer planets (Uranus, Neptune, Pluto)
  - 12.9 Miscellaneous (comets, meteors, new planets, etc.)
- 13 Other solar systems
- 14 Other universes
  - 14.1 In the space-time continuum
  - 14.2 Microcosmos
  - 14.3 Macrocosmos
- 15 Invasion of earth by extra-terrestrial beings
- 20 TERRESTRIAL EVENTS AND SETTINGS
- 21 The past
  - 21.1 The dinosaur period (or earlier)
  - 21.2 Prehistoric men and mammals
  - 21.3 Early unknown civilizations
  - 21.4 Early known civilizations, up through Egypt
  - 21.5 Historical periods from Greece on
- 22 Utopias
  - 22.1 In the past
  - 22.2 In the present
  - 22.3 In the future
- 23 Future civilizations
  - 23.1 In what is now the past
  - 23.2 In the next two or three decades
  - 23.3 In the next century
  - 23.4 In the next thousand years
  - 23.5 In the next hundred thousand years
  - 23.6 From then on
- 24 Future wars
  - 24.1 In what is now the past
  - 24.2 In the next two or three decades
  - 24.3 In the next century
  - 24.4 In the next thousand years
  - 24.5 In the next hundred thousand years
  - 24.6 From then on
- 25 Future barbarism or Dark Ages
  - 25.1 In what is now the past
  - 25.2 In the next two or three decades
  - 25.3 In the next century
  - 25.4 In the next thousand years
  - 25.5 In the next hundred thousand years
  - 25.6 From then on
- 26 Submarine life
- 27 Subterranean life
- 28 Natural catastrophes
  - 28.1 Extraterrestrial body striking earth



28.2	Geologic upheavals	40	SUPERNATURALISM: THE POWERS OF EVIL
28.3	Earth growing hot	41	Satanism
28.4	Earth growing cold	42	Demonology
28.5	Cloud or gas from space	43	Witchcraft, sorcery, black magic
28.6	Fatal plague	44	Diabolic or pagan cults
28.7	Plague of sterility	45	Vampirism
28.8	Disintegration of an important material	46	Lycanthropy and therianthropy
		47	Ghouls and monstrosities
		48	Animated corpses (zombies, etc.)
30	SCIENTIFIC ADVANCES; DISCOVERIES; INVENTIONS	50	SUPERNATURALISM: THE OCCULT
31	The physical sciences	51	Ghosts
31.1	Atomic power	52	Spiritualism
31.2	Other new forms of energy	53	Psychic residues in inanimate matter
31.3	Rays and vibrations	53.1	In objects
31.4	Invisibility	53.2	In houses
31.5	Robots	53.3	In sections of ground or land
31.6	Gases and explosives	54	Transference of personality
31.7	Distortions of, & other dimensions in, the space-time continuum	55	Clairvoyance
31.8	Wave transmission of matter	56	Poltergeists
32	The biological sciences	57	Mystic cults
32.1	Supermen & other human mutations	58	Dimensional distortions & invasions
32.2	Immortality	60	SUPERNATURALISM: MYTHOLOGY
32.3	Advanced surgery and medicine	61	Nordic supernaturalism
32.4	Synthetic life	62	Celtic supernaturalism
32.5	Giant or intelligent insects	63	Medieval European supernaturalism
32.6	Giant or intelligent animals	64	Arabic supernaturalism
32.7	Animal hybrids; new species	65	Oriental supernaturalism
32.8	Strange forms of plant life	66	African & voodoo supernaturalism
33	The social sciences	67	Oceanic supernaturalism
34	Psychology and telepathy	68	Amerindian supernaturalism
35	Time travel	70	PURE FANTASY
35.1	In a fixed past or future	71	The next world (after death)
35.2	In alternate pasts, presents, or futures	72	Miracles
35.3	By mechanical means	73	Reincarnation
35.4	By metaphysical means	74	Wish-granting
35.5	By suspended animation	75	Graeco-Roman mythology
35.6	By ancestral memory	76	Inanimate objects coming to life
36	Large-scale engineering feats	77	Other civilizations, worlds, universes
37	New lands on earth	78	Fortean themes (Vitions; matter is mind)

It will be noticed that practically all the numbers ending in "nine" are missing; like Speer, I originally listed these numbers as "Miscellaneous" but at his suggestion have incorporated that heading under the numbers ending in "zero", which are general categories covering two or more subdivisions. This leaves the "nine" numbers free for use for additional categories, though there is no necessity for using more numbers than are required to subdivide each section completely and logically. The absence of subdivisions for most of the numbers, particularly in the supernatural and fantasy sections, is due simply to my not having got around to them yet; this is not a complete or final version of the classification, and my purpose in sending it out is to ask for suggestions as to improving and extending the system to include all common fantasy subject-matters without too much overlapping. Clifford D. Simak has suggested furthermore that a parallel classification system be constructed to cover the commoner plot-situations used in fantasy fiction--e.g., some of the categories under 11; such a system could utilize combinations of capital and small letters instead of figures. This sheet is being distributed through the FAPA and to persons on the mailing lists of various Los Angeles fan magazines; non-FAPA-members may send their comments to me at 1810 N. Harvard Blvd., Hollywood 27, California--likewise requests for extra copies. All useful suggestions will be incorporated into a revised version which will be sent to everyone who has received this sheet. SDR