

what the Science Fiction Club is and what it does, and what it fails to do.

Science fiction at AT&T? It seems like a natural, doesn't it? AT&T are the people who build those impressive bulbous buildings at

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World's Fairs and places like the Epcot Center. "Come in and see the World of Tomorrow, today." You get the feeling that AT&T is just chock full of the wonders of the world's future. (If they only knew, huh?) Bell Laboratories has a reputation for being the starting point of the future with the invention of nice little gizmos like the transistor and the laser and discoveries like the background radiation from the Big Bang. Working there must be like working for the secret society from T h i s I s l a n d E a r t h. And of course all these really imaginative people would be into science fiction, right?

Well, in 1978 when Mark and Evelyn Leeper (your humble authors) came to Bell Labs, science fiction activity was a handful of people who shared a subscription to the Science Fiction Book Club and traded off books. It wasn't that there was a lack of interest, but nobody wanted to take on the awesome responsibility of organizing a science fiction club for AT&T employees. It was something of a struggle to find ten people to say they were interested.

Today the "Mt Holz Science Fiction Club" is, as far as we know, the largest science fiction society in New Jersey (please hold your applause till the end) with over 200 members. Sponsored by AT&T, through good times and divestiture, as an unadvertised fringe benefit for its employees (AT&T, incidentally, contributes only space--they take no responsibility for the actions of the Science Fiction Club, just as the Club takes no responsibility for the actions of AT&T--it's a comfortable relationship), the Club has members at more than 40 AT&T locations around the world (including Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, and the United Kingdom) and activities at two (Holmdel and Middletown, New Jersey). At those locations and Lincroft there is also an active science fiction lending library packed into whatever spare office space we can muster. (Members at other sites can borrow via inter-office mail.) There are also tri-weekly meetings, typically to discuss a book

chosen at a previous meeting, but we also show videotapes, sponsor book exchanges, listen to radio recordings, and generally do what we can to keep out of mischief over lunch hour.

The binding thread of the Club is the weekly science fiction notice (the MT VOID), which features slanted editorials, more slanted book and film reviews by members, slander, malicious gossip, tidbits of juicy news gleaned from members attending science fiction conventions, and arguments between members. It is one of perhaps two or three weekly fanzines in the country (perhaps the only one). The last three years Evelyn Leeper has been nominated for the fan writer Hugo award, the science fiction equivalent of the Oscar, for writings written for the club publication (though they have subsequently appeared elsewhere).

3. Member Susan Hallander read my piece on letting the month of May save you big bucks on calendar buying and has piped in with her own

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suggestion:

Since there are only 7 days of the week and each year is either a leap year or it isn't, there are only $7*2=14$ different calendars, So, another money saving tip is to save every calendar you get and simply wait until that permutation of a year comes along again. Of course, people may ask why you've got an old calendar hanging on your wall, but I had one from 1974 hanging all through 1991 and nobody even noticed.

Actually I have thought of the same hint. However, there are some bugs in the system. Your 1992 calendar will be useful again, never fear. The next time will be in the year 2020. The last calendar that would have been appropriate to reuse in 1992 was the calendar from 1964. Actually this year's calendar, not being a leap year, is considerably more accessible. A 1982 is correct for this year again. If you didn't save one from that year just bring up your 1971 calendar you have been keeping in that old trunk.

But thank you, Susan, for that extremely useful tip.

4. Note that CONSIDER PHLEBAS has replaced THE USE OF WEAPONS as

the Iain Banks book to be discussed, since the former contains a lot of background material in an appendix that would be useful to flesh out the society being described. [-ecl]

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Men have feverishly conceived a heaven only to find it insipid, and a hell to find it ridiculous.

-- George Santayana

SPACE RANGERS
A film review by Mark R. Leeper
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The premiere of CBS's S p a c e R a n g e r s is a fast-paced hour, but at heart just an empty cops-and-robbers story stocked with what at first appear to be thinly veiled stereotypes. The series will have to work very hard to cultivate real audience interest in the

characters. The setting is Fort Hope on the planet of Avalon, essentially a police station. The main characters are a squad of five good cops who got a hard time from their superiors. There are three cops in the twenty-ish range who look like they belong on a disco floor--one of them, Jo-Jo (played by Marjorie Managhan) is a Rebecca-DeMornay-style blonde who wear too much make-up. Unfortunately, two better actors, Linda Hunt and Gottfried John, are relegated mostly to background roles.

Much of the dialogue is snappy, but that is no substitute for intelligent writing. And some of the writing is notably bad. For example, the main character says, "Anybody else would call us misfits, but I call us 'family.'" Elsewhere the script steals a line from L_a_w_r_e_n_c_e_o_f_A_r_a_b_i_a.

Visual effects for the first episode range from acceptable to downright impressive. However, it is questionable if the quantity and quality of the effects will be sustained in subsequent episodes. The over-use of sound effects on the soundtrack eventually becomes oppressive. Combine that with overly cute wipes between scenes and you have a series that is visually a little more than it needs to be, but one light on ideas. S_p_a_c_e_R_a_n_g_e_r_s will appeal to action fans but it will probably win few fans from S_t_a_r_T_r_e_k.