

SCIENCE FICTION MARKET SURVEY

1956

by Sam Moskowitz.

INTRODUCTION

THE 14TH WORLD SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION held in New York City, August 31st through September 3rd, 1956, will make history because it conducted the first general business survey of the science fiction publishing field. The closest things to it have been the two surveys made by ASTOUNDING S-F of its readership. There is no comparison between the two. ASTOUNDING's was limited primarily to information concerning the nature of its own readers, while this survey places the entire field in perspective.

This survey is no popularity poll. It did not ask for favorite magazines or authors; instead, it concentrated entirely on the business aspects of what the readers buy and how often. The response to this survey was the largest ever to have been received in any type of general science fiction poll, and represented about one-third of the total attendance at the New York Convention.

This survey will also go a long way towards solving the difference between the general science fiction reader and the science fiction fan. Science fiction editors have in the past publicly issued statements discounting the opinions of the active letter-writers as untypical of the mass of their readership. Therefore, to put the results of this survey into pointed focus, the question was asked: "Do you have an active interest in science fiction fandom?" 58% of the respondents expressed no interest at all in science fiction fandom. The remaining 42% claimed they had an interest in science fiction fandom.

The results have been tabulated three ways: according to the general reader, according to the fan, and a composite of both. Interested parties may completely ignore the fan replies if they wish and get the only sampling of general science fiction readers' buying habits ever compiled. They can also match the views of the general reader with those of the fan and see to what degree they coincide. This will enable them to gain a better idea of the value of the opinions of the fan letter-writers in the future.

The initial idea of this survey was worked up by Sam Moskowitz and Dr. Thomas S. Gardner. The tabulations were done by Richard and Pat Ellington, Jean Carroll and Sam Moskowitz. All the statistical work and interpretation was done by Sam Moskowitz, who makes his living conducting nation-wide surveys of the frozen foods industry for QUICK FROZEN FOODS MAGAZINE, the leading trade publication of that \$2½ billion industry.

Moskowitz has been consulted by DuPont, Birds Eye, Campbell Soups, Consumers Research, and hundreds of other major companies as one of the outstanding experts on the frozen foods industry. The statistics of a frozen fruit pie survey which he conducted last fall resulted in the entire industry retooling to a family size instead of a single serving pie which had formerly been promoted. The result was a \$16 million increase in sales of such products. Recently he presented a 10,000 word history and analysis of the packers of prepared foods, together with two major surveys of the field, as a recommendation that the Small Business Administration and banks liberalize conditions for loans to that industry because the growth pattern was more explosive than in most.

Sam Moskowitz is generally regarded as the outstanding authority on science fiction, being one of the world's students of the subject, and thoroughly familiar with the editing, distribution and writing of science fiction, as well as its history. Therefore, we felt that Sam Moskowitz was the man best qualified to handle a statistical business analysis of the science fiction industry.

The editors of SCIENCE FICTION TIMES have had the opportunity to examine the returns, and stand completely behind the reliability and authenticity of this survey.

These results are presented as a service to the science fiction industry, which could not have obtained comparable facts without the investment of many thousands of dollars with a major research corporation.

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The Editors, SCIENCE FICTION TIMES

SCIENCE FICTION MARKET SURVEY 1956

by Sam Moskowitz

- ① The general science fiction reader buys four science fiction titles regularly; three more occasionally. The active science fiction fan buys five titles regularly; four more occasionally.
- ② 75% of the regular readers of AMAZING STORIES also read ASTOUNDING SCIENCE FICTION regularly.
- ③ The average age of the readers of AMAZING STORIES is older than that of the readers of either ASTOUNDING SCIENCE FICTION or GALAXY.
- ④ Only minor differences are shown in the magazine buying preferences of general readers and fans.
- ⑤ 96% of the general readers buy science fiction pocket books --- 38% of them buy 24 or more a year.
- ⑥ 77% of the general readers read hard cover science fiction books --- 40% buy one or more hard cover books annually.
- ⑦ 18.4% of the general readers belong to the Doubleday S-F Book Club; 24% of the fans belong.
- ⑧ 34.9% of the general readers primarily make their living from, or are interested in, science and technology.
- ⑨ Interest in science fiction increased for 25% of the general readers, stayed the same for another 63%.
- ⑩ The magazine field is supported by a relatively small group of multiple purchasers.
- ⑪ 75% of the general readers are adults, over the age of 21.

THE ABOVE ARE A FEW of the facts determined from the statistics compiled from the world's first survey of the science fiction industry. All of the above are facts provable by the cold hard statistics of the survey returns. What do they mean?

Let us take them one at a time and analyze them. Readers were asked to check off what magazines they read regularly. The leaders, as might have been expected, were: ASTOUNDING S-F: 69%; GALAXY S-F: 65%; and MAGAZINE OF FANTASY & S-F: 57% (See Table I).

The preferences of the general readers and the fans were quite close, lining up percentagewise within five points or so down to fourth place. Fourth place in the general readers' list was IF, and it was a poor fourth, since only 23% of the general readers bought it regularly, as compared to 55% for MAG OF FANTASY & S-F, the magazine immediately above it. However, the fan placed INFINITY S-F fourth, with 38.5% of them purchasing it regularly, as compared with MAG OF FANTASY & S-F's strong third place 60%. IF followed

TABLE I - Which of the science fiction and fantasy magazines have you read regularly during the past year?

Composite	
Magazine	Percentage
ASTOUNDING S-F	69.0%
GALAXY S-F	65.0
MAGAZINE OF FANTASY & S-F	57.0
INFINITY S-F	27.0
IF, WORLDS OF S-F	26.7
FANTASTIC UNIVERSE S-F	23.7
AMAZING STORIES	21.4
FANTASTIC S-F	21.4
GALAXY NOVELS	19.3
IMAGINATION	18.6
SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY	17.0
OTHER WORLDS SCIENCE STORIES	16.1
IMAGINATIVE TALES	16.1
SCIENCE FICTION STORIES	14.8
FUTURE S-F	13.7
None	10.6
MYSTIC	5.0

Regular Readers	
Magazine	Percentage
ASTOUNDING S-F	68.0%
GALAXY S-F	63.0
MAGAZINE OF FANTASY & S-F	55.0
IF, WORLDS OF S-F	23.0
FANTASTIC UNIVERSE S-F	20.0
AMAZING STORIES	19.5
INFINITY S-F	19.0
GALAXY NOVELS	18.5
FANTASTIC S-F	16.0
IMAGINATION	16.0
OTHER WORLDS SCIENCE STORIES	15.0
SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY	14.5
IMAGINATIVE TALES	13.0
FUTURE S-F	11.7
None	11.0
SCIENCE FICTION STORIES	9.8
MYSTIC	4.2

Fans	
Magazine	Percentage
ASTOUNDING S-F	69.6%

with 32.7%. It is not surprising that INFINITY should show strong fan support, since it is edited by a prominent fan, even reprints fan magazine material and has used stories by many fans and ex-fans. What does raise a very puzzling question is this: on the general readers' list INFINITY showed a regular readership of only 19%, or eighth place, yet, since this survey was taken, it has gone six-weekly and added a companion magazine. It is popularly believed that the active science fiction fans make up only a very small group, so where has INFINITY obtained the readership for its modest success? The answer has to lie, at least partially, in the fact that the so-called "fan" group, the letter-writers, meeting organizers, fan magazine publishers, et al., must be a much larger one than popularly supposed. Circulations are not built out of empty air and the statistics indicate that INFINITY is not getting an impressive number of readers from the general reader group.

Examination of additional readers who purchase magazines occasionally (See Table II) shows that INFINITY is purchased by another 19.6% of the general readers once in a while and by 17.2% of the fans once in a while. This is a poor ninth on the regular readers' list of magazines purchased now and then and only 7th on the fans' list. The now-and-then readers help, but they don't rear as big as the 33% of the readers who buy IF occasionally as opposed to

GALAXY S-F	67.2
MAGAZINE OF FANTASY & S-F	60.0
INFINITY S-F	38.5
IF, WORLDS OF S-F	32.7
FANTASTIC S-F	28.6
FANTASTIC UNIVERSE S-F	24.5
AMAZING STORIES	23.8
IMAGINATION	22.0
SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY	21.3
IMAGINATIVE TALES	20.4
GALAXY NOVELS	20.4
SCIENCE FICTION STORIES	19.0
OTHER WORLDS SCIENCE STORIES	18.0
FUTURE S-F	15.5
None	13.5
MYSTIC	5.7

only 20.5% of the fans who buy IF occasionally. IF is more popular with the general reader than INFINITY, yet the facts are that INFINITY is published more frequently than IF, and also supports a companion. It must be showing some black in the books and the statistics prove that the only high percentage of support is emanating from the fans! This throws the question as to the number of fans open to reconsideration.

ASTOUNDING S-F, with the highest record of regular purchasers, naturally would rank low on occasional purchases; however, GALAXY S-F, with the second highest number of regular purchasers registers very high, second in occasional ratings and ties with IF for first place in collective ratings. A combination of all regular and irregular purchasers, both fan and general reader (See Table III), reveals that 92.7% of the respondents to this survey purchased GALAXY at some time during the year. This was higher than the 88.3% registered for ASTOUNDING. This can mean only one thing. GALAXY attracts a larger number of people, and, therefore, potentially has the largest circulation in the field. But she is unable to keep them as regulars. Is there too much whipped cream and not enough steak and potatoes in GALAXY's material?

Since we know that ASTOUNDING has a good solid circulation (it is the only s-f mag that publishes circulation reports), the 69% of regular readership it collectively chalks up dramatically contrasted with the percentage of regular readers possessed by the magazines below the top three, reveals the extent of circulation of its competitors. The regular readership of all but the second and third place magazines was only 20% to 40% of ASTOUNDING's at the date this survey was taken. They obviously could not survive at so low a figure. What keeps them going? The answer is partly contained in the occasional table, which shows that a magazine like IF can expect 33% of the readers who do not include it on their regular list will pick it up occasionally. How many

copies a year an occasional purchase represents is almost impossible to precisely determine, but it is assumed that a reader who claims to purchase a title occasionally will buy more than one a year. Assuming that each of the occasional purchasers buys IF twice a year, that would be the equivalent of 11% more regular sales, on the basis of six issues per year.

Naturally this purchase would not be spread out evenly, so IF would find considerable fluctuation, depending on the appeal of certain issues and other factors of sales and distribution. In this case, IF has been used as an example, merely because it has the highest rate of now-and-then sales, but the same ratio could be applied to the other publications, giving the values of the once-in-a-while buyer. In the case of IF, with a normal regular readership of 23% of the general reader, another 11% of now-and-then readers means that more than 32% of IF's total readership is transient! That figure could be cut down 6% or 7% if the fan readership should prove larger than popularly supposed, since IF has a much larger percentage of fan readers on a regular basis (almost 10% more) than it has regular general readers. Even so, these statistics dramatically point up the insecurity of the circulation figures of all but the top titles. Most of the science fiction magazines are living on chance, good times and charity.

There is one magazine in this survey for which I feel the results may be invalid. That publication is SCIENCE FICTION STORIES. That particular magazine carries above its title logo the words: "The Original". Those words are not part of the title. They are intended to mean that SCIENCE FICTION STORIES was the first magazine ever to be titled simply: "Science Fiction". Many readers think this is the title of the publication, including those who stenciled this survey. On the survey the magazine was listed as ORIGINAL SF STORIES. I feel that in this form it may have confused those who know it by its correct title. Therefore, though I include the tabulations on that publication, it should be acknowledged that

TABLE II - Which professional science fiction and fantasy magazines have you read occasionally during the past year?

Composite	
Magazine	Percentage
IF, WORLDS OF S-F	27.7%
GALAXY S-F	27.7
AMAZING STORIES	27.3
IMAGINATION	23.8
FANTASTIC S-F	20.7
FANTASTIC UNIVERSE S-F	20.0
None	19.7
ASTOUNDING S-F	19.3
MAGAZINE OF FANTASY & S-F	18.6
INFINITY S-F	17.9
FUTURE S-F	17.5
OTHER WORLDS SCIENCE STORIES	15.1
SCIENCE FICTION STORIES	14.4
SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY	13.8
IMAGINATIVE TALES	13.0
GALAXY NOVELS	11.6
MYSTIC	5.3

Regular Readers	
Magazine	Percentage
IF, WORLDS OF S-F	33.1%
GALAXY S-F	29.3
AMAZING STORIES	28.2
FANTASTIC UNIVERSE S-F	24.0
IMAGINATION	24.0
MAGAZINE OF FANTASY & S-F	23.3
None	22.5
ASTOUNDING S-F	22.1
FANTASTIC S-F	22.1
INFINITY S-F	19.6
SCIENCE FICTION STORIES	15.5
FUTURE S-F	14.6
OTHER WORLDS SCIENCE STORIES	14.6
GALAXY NOVELS	14.0
IMAGINATIVE TALES	12.8
SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY	12.8
MYSTIC	4.9

Fans	
Magazine	Percentage
AMAZING STORIES	26.3%

the accuracy of that statistic is doubtful. My doubt is predicated on my own feeling that SCIENCE FICTION STORIES should have ranked higher in the scorings. Circumstantial evidence, however, shows that its readership may not have been as great as supposed. This evidence is found in the fact that the magazine has dropped 16 pages, abandoned projected monthly publication, and cheapened its paper since this survey was taken!

It is worth noting that frequency of publication has something to do with regularity of readership. No magazine appearing on a monthly basis is listed lower than eighth of the sixteen titles evaluated, and only two in the first eight are not monthlies. Those two are IF, which was a monthly for a period, and INFINITY, which has gone six-weekly since this survey was taken.

A vital part of the survival of the science fiction magazines is concerned with the size of their audience. Does this survey give any idea as to the total number of the science fiction audience?

The answer is that it very certainly does. Results of this survey show that the general reader buys an average of four titles regularly (See Table IV) and another three occasionally (See Table V). The fan buys five titles regularly (See Table VI) and another five occasionally (See Table VII). Because

GALAXY S-F	25.4
IMAGINATION	23.7
FUTURE S-F	21.3
IF, WORLDS OF S-F	20.5
FANTASTIC S-F	19.0
INFINITY S-F	17.2
None	16.0
OTHER WORLDS SCIENCE STORIES	15.6
ASTOUNDING S-F	15.6
SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY	14.7
FANTASTIC UNIVERSE S-F	14.7
SCIENCE FICTION STORIES	13.1
IMAGINATIVE TALES	13.1
MAGAZINE OF FANTASY & S-F	12.3
GALAXY NOVELS	8.0
MYSTIC	5.7

at this point the fan difference is 25% greater in the quantity of purchase, I have deliberately refrained from combining the two figures since it would not give a fair estimate. Either way it shows that the average science fiction reader buys on a regular or irregular basis 7 to 9 titles!

According to STANDARD RATE AND DATA, ASTOUNDING for the first six months of 1956 averaged 80,908 newsstand sale, and a total of 91,691 average with subs. For the second six months of 1956, it averaged 88,404 newsstand sale, and 100,446 average with subs. If we accept these figures as being essentially correct, as the people who buy advertising in ASTOUNDING must, and since 69% of all readers who answered this survey buy ASTOUNDING S-F regularly, we may do some projecting.

Another 31% would put the total magazine readership of the field at about 140,000. This is probably too low, since there must be some people who buy science fiction haphazardly or in streaks of interest. What, then, would be a fairer figure?

We have another powerful piece of evidence to use in arriving at this final figure. The results of this survey show that 18.1% of all readers are members of the Doubleday Science Fic-

TABLE III - Percentages of all readers, both general readers and fans, who buy various magazines at any time, whether regularly or occasionally.

GALAXY S-F	92.7%
ASTOUNDING S-F	88.3
MAGAZINE OF FANTASY & S-F	75.6
IF, WORLDS OF S-F	54.4
AMAZING STORIES	48.7
INFINITY S-F	44.9
FANTASTIC UNIVERSE S-F	43.7
IMAGINATION	42.4
FANTASTIC S-F	42.1
FUTURE S-F	31.2
OTHER WORLDS SCIENCE STORIES	31.2
GALAXY NOVELS	30.9
SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY	30.8
SCIENCE FICTION STORIES	29.2
IMAGINATIVE TALES	29.1
MYSTIC	10.3

TABLE IV - Giving the number of magazines read regularly by the general reader.

None	11.0%	9	.6%
1	11.0	10	1.2
2	21.0	11	0.
3	22.4	12	.6
4	9.3	13	.6
5	5.0	14	0.
6	2.5	15	6.2
7	4.8	16	1.2
8	3.0		

The general reader reads an average of four titles regularly.

TABLE V - Giving the number of magazines read occasionally by the general reader.

None	22.0%	9	.6%
1	20.5	10	2.4
2	13.5	11	1.2
3	10.0	12	.6
4	12.0	13	.6
5	5.0	14	0.
6	6.0	15	0.
7	2.4	16	0.
8	3.6		

The general reader reads an average of three titles occasionally.

TABLE VI - Giving the number of magazines read regularly by the fan.

None	13.5%	9	1.5%
1	9.0	10	0.
2	16.0	11	1.5
3	19.0	12	1.0
4	6.5	13	2.0
5	8.0	14	4.0
6	4.0	15	4.0
7	3.0	16	3.0
8	4.0		

TABLE VII - Giving the number of magazines read occasionally by the fan.

None	16.4%	9	2.5%
1	20.0	10	.8
2	13.0	11	.8
3	12.0	12	0.
4	10.0	13	.8
5	5.0	14	.8
6	2.5	15	8.2
7	3.0	16	0.
8	4.2		

TABLE VIII - How many hard cover books in the science fiction and fantasy field have you read during the past year (as far as you can remember)?

77% of the general readers read hard cover books. Of those who do:

18.2% read 1 to 3 books;
22.2% read 4 to 6 books;
13.5% read 7 to 9 books;
8.0% read 10 to 12 books;
and 38.1% read more than 12.

89% of the fans read hard cover books. Of those who do:

24.0% read 1 to 3 books;
17.0% read 4 to 6 books;
7.0% read 7 to 9 books;
5.0% read 10 to 12 books;
and 47.0% read more than 12.

Combined, 82% of all readers read hard cover books. Of those who do:

20.4% read 1 to 3 books;
20.0% read 4 to 6 books;
10.6% read 7 to 9 books;
6.8% read 10 to 12 books;
and 42.0% read more than 12.

TABLE IX - How many of these science fiction books did you buy?

	Fan	Reader	Combined
1 to 3	19.3%	21.4%	20.5%
4 to 6	18.4	11.7	14.6
7 to 9	6.2	6.5	6.3
10 to 12	7.9	5.2	6.3
More than 12	21.9	14.9	17.9
None	26.3	40.3	34.4
No Answer	6.6	5.5	6.0

TABLE X - How many non science fiction books did you read last year?

	Fan	Reader	Combined
None	1.6%	3.1%	2.5%
1 to 6	17.2	14.8	16.0
7 to 12	13.8	19.0	16.8
12 to 18	11.5	12.8	12.3
19 to 24	8.3	8.0	8.0
Over 24	46.0	40.5	42.7
No Answer	1.6	1.8	1.7

tion Book Club. According to reports, the top sale Doubleday ever racked up on a dollar club title was 28,000. Personally this seems high to me, but let us accept it at face value, since it is commonly circulated throughout the field. If we were to accept the fact that 18.1% equals 28,000 readers, and project it to its equivalent of 100%, it would come out to a little over 150,000 total readers for the book and magazine fields combined!

In view of the ASTOUNDING projection of 140,000; this seems a reasonable figure. Yet, many may indignantly protest that it is a ridiculously low figure to support the 16 titles on the stands at the time of this survey.

Facts and statistics, however, bear out that the actual figure may be close, and here is why:

General Readers

65% purchase 0 to 3 magazines regularly representing 30% of total sales;
25.2% purchase 4 to 9 magazines regularly representing 38% total sales;
9.8% purchase 10 to 16 magazines regularly, representing 32% of the total sales.

Fans

57.5% purchase 0 to 3 magazines regularly representing 20% of total sales;
27.5% purchase 4 to 9 magazines regularly representing 33% total sales;
15% purchase 10 to 16 magazines regularly representing 47% of total sales.

Let us completely disregard the fan statistics and merely take those for the general reader. What do they show?

They show that 9.8% of the general readers, if the cross-section who answered this survey is any criterion, buy 32% of all the copies of science fiction magazines sold to general readers in the United States!

The 65% of the readers who purchase on a regular basis only three or less science fiction magazines do not buy as many copies as the hard-core 9.8%!

TABLE XI - How many paper covered books did you read in the past year?

	Fan	Reader	Combined
None	3.0%	2.0%	2.4%
1 to 6	20.0	20.0	19.4
7 to 12	16.5	16.0	15.5
12 to 18	15.0	14.0	14.3
18 to 24	6.0	8.0	7.2
Over 24	43.0	38.0	40.0
No answer	1.0	2.0	1.2

TABLE XII -Do you belong to the Double-day S-F Book Club?

	Fan	Reader	Combined
YES	24.0%	18.4%	21.0%
NO	74.0	74.0	74.0
No answer	2.0	7.6	5.0

Were that 9.8% to reduce their purchase to even a normal three purchased by the majority, sales of all science fiction magazines would drop a devastating 25%, and only 5 or 6 magazines could be supported at the new level.

In other words, the science fiction magazines are utterly, completely and hopelessly dependent upon the rabid multiple purchasers. Individually, the magazines are, with the few obvious exceptions, incapable of building up their own audiences.

The survey provides conclusive evidence to further support these facts. AMAZING STORIES, the oldest magazine in the field, is today regarded as the epitome of the action adventure magazine catering to the juvenile element. ASTOUNDING is generally acknowledged to aim at the highest level of scientific and technological interest. In policy, these two magazines are antipodal.

However, a check of the returns of all general readers, not fans mind you, but general readers who read AMAZING STORIES regularly, revealed that 75% of them also read ASTOUNDING S-F regularly!

Another fact, even more surprising, is also uncovered. That fact is, that the average age of readers of AMAZING

STORIES is substantially older than that of readers of ASTOUNDING! (See Table XVI). Again the statistics are taken from the general reader only.

What does this mean?

It means that there were not two large groups of readership in existence at the time of this survey, one preferring action, the other cerebral, science fiction, as generally believed. This is due, primarily, in my opinion to the fact that during the height of the 1950-53 boom in science fiction, the field went high-hat and drove out most of the less sophisticated readers, who either grew up, or lost their taste for science fiction, since. That was the period during which almost all magazines began publishing psychological science fiction.

It means that AMAZING STORIES has not been successful in building up a large new group of action readers up to September, 1956, and that a great percentage of its readers are the same ones who buy the other magazines. Possibly they read AMAZING for old time's sake, perhaps because it has good distribution and is handy, perhaps for its fan departments (the ones it had back then!) But the majority do not read it because AMAZING STORIES is their number one preference. AMAZING survives because the average general reader buys four or more science fiction magazines regularly and three more occasionally. It survives only because the average science fiction reader is a heavy multiple purchaser.

This does not mean that AMAZING may not develop an audience predominantly its own. It means it had not done so up to September, 1956.

The higher average age of AMAZING's readers is no indictment of ASTOUNDING, which has more than twice as many readers in the 17 to 20 year old prime college year group. Except in the "over 50" category, AMAZING's readership is older in every division. This means that AMAZING STORIES is slanted wrongly for a juvenile audience which either does not exist, or does not find AMAZING to its liking. Less than 12% of AMAZING's readers are under the age of 21. ASTOUNDING has almost 21% under that age.

If we are to consider a person 21 years of age or over an adult, then less than 25% of all non-fan readers of science fiction are not adults. The fan percentage is slightly higher, with almost 32% being under the age of 21 (See Table XV).

Even if the fan readership is considerably larger than supposed, a magazine that slants towards the teenager

TABLE XIV - In which of the following fields does your work or main interest lie?

Interest	Fans	Reader	Combined
Science & Engineering	33.7%	34.9%	34.3%
Arts & Literature	25.4	13.6	18.7
Business	10.7	18.7	15.2
Commerce & Transportation	1.6	1.8	1.7
Student	19.6	21.8	20.9
Housewife	2.5	6.8	4.9
Retired	.8	0.0	
Mining	.8	0.0	
No special interest	4.9	.6	
Others & no answer	0.0	1.0	4.3

TABLE XV - What is your age?

Age Group	Fans	Readers	Combined
16 or less	7.4%	5.0%	6.0%
17 to 20 yrs	24.3	19.1	21.5
21 to 29 yrs	32.5	35.0	34.0
30 to 39 yrs	19.4	30.0	25.1
40 to 49 yrs	7.4	7.4	7.4
50 and over	9.0	3.6	6.0

TABLE XVI - Comparison of age groups of general readers who read ASTOUNDING S-F and AMAZING STORIES regularly, but not necessarily both, with GALAXY S-F and MAGAZINE OF FANTASY & S-F included for interest.

Name Of Magazine	16 & less	17 to 20	21 to 29	30 to 39	40 to 49	50 & up
ASTOUNDING S-F	3.8%	17.1%	35.3%	31.5%	9.5%	2.8%
AMAZING STORIES	3.0	8.8	32.3	38.2	14.7	1.3
GALAXY S-F	2.9	19.4	31.1	33.0	9.7	3.9
MAG OF FANTASY & S-F	0.0	12.9	37.6	36.5	10.6	2.4

is committing suicide. It is doing so for two reasons. First, because the statistics show conclusively that only about 25% of the potential audience lies in that zone. Secondly, because the statistics also show that all but 5% or 6% of that group are in the college bracket, from age 17 to 20. Our statistics also show that about 20% of all science fiction readers are students, and this percentage coincides very closely with the ASTOUNDING and GALAXY percentages of 17% to 19% of their readers in the 17 to 20 age brackets. College students are above average in intelligence and are the least likely group to buy a juvenile publication. Further, AMAZING STORIES, which does have a teenage slant, struck out with the youthful readership, while ASTOUNDING, which has the furthest removed policy from such a slant, did well.

There is evidence to support the supposition that back in the early 30's the average age of the science fiction readership was considerably lower than it is today, even though the scientific content of the stories was a bit higher for their day.

One of the most perplexing questions asked in the science fiction publishing field has been what triggered off the spate of new s-f titles in the late summer of 1956. None of the magazines appeared to be doing better than average. Each new magazine published had a different explanation. All of these explanations, such as publishing a science fiction magazine to use up paper supplies for detective titles which flopped, because a new company was being started and a title was wanted in the field, to see if a different

type of science fiction would sell better --- all had a certain degree of validity to them. Nevertheless, they did not take into account the quantity of the new titles. Was it a coincidence that they all broke at once? Statistics show a more valid reason than any so far promulgated (See Table XIII).

When the general reader was asked whether his interest in science fiction had increased, decreased or stayed the same in the previous year, 9% said it had decreased, 63% stayed the same, and 25% increased. That last figure is most important, since an increase in interest is always followed by an increase in purchase. Subtracting the 9% of ostensibly lowered purchase because of a decline in interest, leaves a remainder of 16% who increased their purchases. If this increase took the form of an average of one more title bought regularly by each of that 16%, it would have been enough to have encouraged publishers that the field was beginning to turn upward.

The fan increase in interest was an even higher 34%, as might be expected, since the fan expresses a change in attitude more enthusiastically than the general reader.

As to why this increase in interest took place, the only easy item to grasp at is the International Geophysical Year and the proposed launching of the first Earth Satellite --- which is an event calculated to restimulate the interest of the long-suffering science-fiction reader, who has long believed in its inevitability.

One of the most important facts spotlighted by this survey was the importance of paper-backed books or pocket books in the reading entertainment of the science-fictionist (See Table XI). An astonishing total of 98% of all the general readers reported that they read pocket books; the figure was only 1% lower for the fans. Therefore, it can be said without fear of contradiction that the magazine audience and the pocket book audience are the same people, at least up to the point where a science fiction pocket book begins to soar over 150,000 copies in sales.

Inevitably this must have reper-

cussions upon the sale of the magazines, since the pocket books sell for the same price or less, receive as wide or wider distribution, contain on the average better material due to the high percentage of reprints and the strong rates paid for new material, and often greater wordage. The extent to which the pocket book sale cuts into the sale of magazines is graphically brought into focus by the fact that 38% of the general readers buy 24 or more pocket books a year. 78% buy 7 or more pocket books a year. Only 20% buy 6 or less.

The figures for the fans on the purchase of pocket books are close enough as to leave no argument.

It needs no genius to estimate what the results on the circulations of the science fiction magazines would be if that 78% of the readership who buy 7 or more pocket books a year were to switch their purchases to magazines. For that matter, the impact of those who buy 24 or more pocket books a year, representing 2 a month, transferred to the magazines, would fuse life into the entire field and put most every publication comfortably in the black.

Therefore it becomes obvious that the pocket books have been a major deterrent to the increased sales of science fiction magazines up to this time, and are their most dangerous competition.

I use the phrase "up to this time" advisedly, since I believe that pocket books may have partially reversed their role as competitors and may actually be increasing the science fiction readership.

My reason for this logic is that the dozens of science fiction pocket books being sold are inevitably reaching a large number of non-science fiction readers, who have picked them up for a few hours of light reading in much the same manner as they would pick up a detective story or a historical novel. The law-of-averages would make it inevitable that a certain percentage of such persons would cultivate a taste for the field and sample the magazines. Whether the magazines held the new readership would be another matter, but that pocket books would induce new people to sample the science fiction pub-

lications seems incontrovertible. In this respect, the paperbacks are doing a recruiting job for science fiction.

Another reason why I used the phrase "up to this time" in relation to the pocket books relates to the fact that the average quality of most science fiction is so low, that pocket books depending on reprints from magazines are inevitably finding their standards consistently lowered. When the average quality of the pocket book becomes not-too-far-removed from that of the science fiction magazine, a good deal of its commercial appeal will evaporate.

Science fiction general readers also proved to be strong readers and purchasers of hard cover science fiction books (See Tables VIII & IX). Fully 77% of all general readers who replied to this survey admitted to reading hard cover science fiction books. More than 38% read 12 or more a year. This is a very high percentage. The point in question then remains, how many of these readers bought and paid for such hard cover books? The answer is a full 40% of the general readers of science fiction actually bought one or more hard cover books during the past year. 18.4%, almost 50% of the book-buying group, were members of the Doubleday S-F Book Club (See Table XII), which issues a hard cover selection a month for one dollar plus postage, and offers premiums for joining the club and continuing membership.

The claims that the Doubleday Book Club has seriously injured the sale of hard cover science fiction books, if these survey figures are any criterion, are now provably true, even if we discount a certain percentage of readers who might never have bought a hard cover book is it had not been offered to them at the low one dollar price.

However, to the credit side, it is quite conceivable that the existence of the Book Club has meant a larger quantitative purchase of books by the general reader than he normally would have purchased, both because of the low price and ease of purchase. The benefit of this larger sale would accrue for the most part to Doubleday. Therefore, Doubleday has undoubtedly hurt

the sale of standard \$3-and-up editions though it has probably boosted the grand total of all hard cover science fiction books sold.

Allowing for all that, in the statistics on book readership and more important book purchase by their readers, the science fiction magazines have a magnificent lever to pry some paid advertising from book companies, since the tremendously high percentage of their readers purchasing books is a provable fact and not an abstraction.

To pursue that matter further, science fiction readers are also heavy readers of other forms of hard cover book material which are not science fiction (See Table X). Of the combined general reader and fan, only 2½% read no outside books, while almost 48% read 24 or more non science fiction books a year. This proves that science fiction readers are also omniverous readers in other fields and therefore represent an excellent market for the general book publisher.

Just what fields might most profitably utilize the pages of science fiction magazines for advertising? The results of the question asking the readers in which fields their work or main interest is laid give the obvious answers (See Table XIV).

As might have been expected, over 34% of the science fiction readers are primarily interested in science and engineering. Another 18.7% favor Arts and Literature, while a reasonably substantial 15.2% are interested in business. Publishers of college texts might also benefit from advertisements in the pages of science fiction magazines, since almost 21% of all readers are students, and judging by their age level charts, they are primarily college, not high school, students.

The occupation figures have a more pointed meaning to the science fiction magazine editor from the circulation standpoint. It used to be a fairly axiomatic conception in the earlier days of science fiction that the readers were primarily interested in science, otherwise they would not be purchasing the magazine. The feeling of recent times has swung towards the view that they were predominantly interested in

the literary or artistic side of the story. How the story is presented is today generally considered more important than its subject matter.

If we are to judge by readers' preferences, this is one field where the editors have been right in claiming that the opinion of the fans did not necessarily reflect the views of the majority. The figures show that while the same number of fans are interested in science and technology as general readers (slightly over one third), only 13.6% of the general readers are interested in Arts and Literature as compared to a rather large 25.4% of the fans. This statistic is brought further into focus by the fact that 18.7% of the general readers listed their primary work or main occupation as business, compared to only 10.7% of the fans.

Quite obviously, then, the fans have in their ranks a much greater percentage of writers, editors, lovers of general literature and art than do the general readers. More of them even make their living in this line. Since the fans are the most vocal, their letters and opinions would lay disproportionate weight on the literary quality of the story. The general reader would not be quite as fastidious.

This provides two strong reasons why the science fiction magazines should place stronger emphasis on ideas. A story with mediocre handling and a strong scientific idea should not automatically lose out to the story with slick handling but an old theme. While a substantial number of readers are interested in Arts and Literature, the largest single group of them, over 34%, admittedly has its primary interest or occupation in fields of science and technology. To please the largest percentage of readership, the weight should be shifted slightly in favor of the science.

The magazine with the strongest continuous science content in its stories is generally acknowledged to be ASTOUNDING. That is also the magazine with provably the largest and steadiest circulation in the field. This survey would seem to indicate that at least part of ASTOUNDING's success is due to its scientific tone.

It should be kept in mind, however, that the readers are interested in better science in the fiction, not in the inclusion of straight scientific articles which they can get in a better form elsewhere. This is a field of fiction as well as science, and the features in the magazines should revolve around the fiction and not the science. This has been demonstrated by the perennial popularity of editorials and readers' columns which are devoted almost entirely to comments on the fiction in the magazine. It also takes into account the relatively greater popularity evidenced in articles about science fiction which appear in the science fiction periodicals, over articles of a straight scientific nature.

Keeping the stories a little stronger towards the science and the departments a little heavier towards the literary is a means of satisfying both the scientific and literary inclinations of the readership.

This leads us to a general consideration of the basic differences between the general readers and the science fiction fans.

First, the science fiction fan buys more of everything; he buys over 25% more magazines, an equally greater number of hard cover books and slightly more pocket books. From a business standpoint this is scarcely something to be deplored, since overall the science fiction fan is the best customer.

The question then becomes one of whether by catering to this customer the editor will be acting contrary to the preferences of the general reader.

At this point statistics come in mighty handy. The statistics show that the top three magazines leading in regular purchase, ASTOUNDING, GALAXY and MAG OF FANTASY & S-F, are comparable for both fans and general readers. The only difference being that a larger percentage of fans buy all such publications regularly than general readers.

From fourth place on there are differences in preference. The fans prefer INFINITY while the general readers prefer IF. As we previously pointed out, INFINITY seems to be doing quite well, if superficial aspects are

any indication. However, IF follows closely behind on the fans' list. In point of popularity the general readers favor GALAXY NOVELS a bit over the fans, rating it the 7th most frequently regularly purchased publication, as compared to the fans rating it 12th. However, percentagewise, slightly more fans purchased GALAXY NOVELS than general readers, so even where tastes differed, the fans were still the better customers.

We find then, as far as the leaders are concerned, that there was to all intents and purposes, no practical difference in preferences of magazines by general readers and by fans. Therefore it would seem that the fan viewpoint on magazine material would for the main part, prove reasonably valid.

The fans purchased substantially more hard cover books than did general readers, though the purchases of both were considerable. All this proves is that fans are better customers.

On paperbacks, the rate of purchase of general readers and fans was so close as to be almost identical, with only a small additional purchase by fans. Since the fan volume of purchase is a minimum of 25% greater on magazines and hard cover books, a near-even percentage of purchase on pocket books indicates that the general reader is sold on the pocket books to even a greater extent than the fans. It means he has deflected a larger percentage of his total reading of science fiction to pocket books than has the fan. Possibly this is because the magazines contain departments and features which attract the fan, and the pocket books, by their very nature, do not. Whatever the reason, it is a fact.

Both the general readers and the fans were heavy perusers of non science fiction books, though there was a slight percentage difference in a few categories, such as 7 to 12 books a year (more general readers in that group); and the "more than 24" category (more fans in that group); but overall the quantities averaged out. This meant that since more than 40% of all readers read 24 or more non science fiction books a year, the science fiction reader was scarcely circumscribed

in his area of reading and therefore in his range of knowledge. Because of the extent of his reading he necessarily had a wide scope of interests and a considerable accumulation of information.

Regarding membership in the Doubleday Book Club, the fans were substantially heavier, 24% of them being members as compared to 18.4% of the general readers. Yet the figures were far from being so wide apart as to be irreconcilable.

In the matter of interest in the field, fan interest increased somewhat more than non-fan, but the percentage that found their interest waning was identical in both groups, some 9%.

The significant difference of interest in the Arts and Literature has been previously discussed, but comparative ages of the two groups still calls for further consideration. On the average, the general reader is older. The primary age brackets in which the general reader is far more numerous than the fan is the 30 to 39 year age group. In this group there are 30% of the general readers as compared to 19.4% of the fans. There are more fans under 16 years of age, 7.4% as compared to 5% for the general reader. This does not seem large at first, but it represents more than 50% more fans in that group than general readers, in percentage. There are also significantly more fans in the college brackets, 17 to 20 years of age, some 24.3% as compared to 19.1% of the general readers. Paradoxically enough, the fan percentage in ages over 50 are almost 2½ times as great as the general reader, 9% as compared to 3.6%. Apparently many, whose ranks would include most authors, never lose their interest.

We find in summarizing the comparison of general readers and fans, the following:

1. little difference in magazine preferences, though the fans buy more magazines.

2. both groups read and buy hard cover books, though the fans buy and read more of them.

3. interest in paperback books from the standpoint of purchase is id-

entical, but a larger percentage of the general readers' total periodical purchasing dollar goes into pocket books than the fans'.

4. both groups have a powerful reading interest in subjects not necessarily associated with science fiction.

5. there is a heavy membership in the Doubleday Science Fiction Book Club in both groups, with fans a bit more enthusiastic.

6. a sharp increase in interest for the science fiction field was shown by both groups, with the fans a trifle more enthusiastic.

7. interest in science and engineering was identical between fans and general readers, but the fan has a considerably stronger interest in Arts and Literature, and a somewhat weaker enthusiasm for business.

8. fans were, on the average, slightly younger than general readers, with 31.4% of the fans below the age of 21, as compared to 24.1% of the general readers.

Concluding the survey, the following basic points emerge:

1. One major group of readers is supporting all the magazines, from the most intellectual to the most juvenile. This is obvious from the statistical evidence that the readers are multiple purchasers.

2. the extent of this group was not much more than 150,000 readers at the time this survey was taken.

3. less than 10% of this number, by purchasing more than 10 magazines regularly, bought 32% of all copies sold, and any substantial lowering of purchase by this 10% could put three-fourths of the magazines out of business.

4. the pocket books were the biggest competition the magazines had, being purchased in greater quantities by virtually the entire magazine readership.

5. the average age in the field was over 21, and therefore magazines should slant to an adult level in the sense that there should be no writing down to the audience.

6. no juvenile field exists large enough to support any title -- at

least it has not been reached.

7. the largest single segment of the readership either made their living or was primarily interested in science and technology. Stories should therefore stress scientific soundness as much as reasonably possible.

8. interest in the field is definitely on the upswing and every effort should be made to keep it so.

9. the aim of every magazine should be to convert its occasional readers into regular readers. Let's face it, you've got to make the product worth the effort.

10. there are clues that the fan audience may number many thousands more than believed. Several magazines catering to this audience appear to be doing slightly better than average.

Naturally, with the expenditure of much more time and effort, it is possible to go into infinitely greater detail out of this survey, primarily to the benefit of individual publications. Carried as far as you have read, I believe it adequately gives the broad facts and highlights, and some of the smaller points which shed light upon the whole.

Because science fiction is composed of so many literary and artistically minded people, it finds it hard to think of itself as an industry. But it is an industry, perforce a small one, but nevertheless one capable of earning revenue for its adherents.

Looking at it from the purely business point of view, this survey represents a major piece of market research for the science fiction industry. A comparable survey, conducted by a private research corporation would cost between \$5,000 and \$10,000 --- if it could be done that way. Obviously, because of the specialized nature of the field, it is doubtful that an outside agency could have presented a properly relevant analysis regardless of price charged or time spent.

It is my hope that the information contained herein will reflect to the increased prosperity and profit of the entire science fiction industry.

--- Sam Moskowitz

This special printed leaflet containing the "Science Fiction Market Survey 1956" by Sam Moskowitz has been prepared specifically for the members of The Fantasy Amatuer Press Association by Sam Moskowitz, 127 Shephard Ave., Newark 12, N. J. and is distributed as a post-mailing to the 81st bundle of that group.

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