

The WSFA Journal

The Official Newsletter of the Washington Science Fiction Association

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From the Editor...

Happy New Year to All! I'm sure everyone will be pleased to know that I don't have a lot to say this month. If you're reading this at First Friday, which I'm hoping it will be ready for, then you may notice that I'm nowhere to be seen. Alexis Gilliland is filling in as Secretary while I'm off gallivanting around the country pretending to be a journalist. If this is First Friday, then I should be leaving Las Vegas with the Consumer Electronics Show beeping, blinking and otherwise making a cacophony of computerized consumerism behind me. I'll be on a red-eye back home...but not in time for the meeting.

There was an interesting development in the assembly of this journal, in that we are able to print both a gaffe and retraction together, thanks to the perusal of meeting minutes by members.

To wit, the cat is not dead, nor was it in an iron lung as reported in the December meeting minutes. We suggest you read Elspeth Kovar's comments (The Cat's Not Dead) before you read the (humorous) comments reported in the minutes. The Undead Cat Affair also spawned a short piece of fiction by the editor included in this issue; "WSFA's Discover Alternate Universe in Clubhouse".

Ernest Lilley – Editor



Essays, Letters and Other Musings

President's Ponderings: Literacy in Decline by Samuel Lubell

About once a decade the U.S. government assesses Americans' reading ability. Only 13% of adults in 2003 scored proficient in prose and document literacy. Worse yet, this is a slight decline from the last test in 1992 when 15% were proficient. Moreover, this decline hit hardest among the most educated segments. The prose literacy of the college educated went from 40% proficient to 31% and those with a graduate degree from 51% proficient to 41% proficient. In document literacy, the % proficient dropped from 37% to 25% among the college graduates and from 45% to 31% among those with graduate studies.

Many of the writers are blaming problems with our high schools and even colleges for this drop in literacy. That's a nice simplistic answer that is almost certainly wrong as the % proficient among 40 to 49 year olds showed a strong drop while the drop among 16 to 24 year olds was not statistically significant.

So why the decline? Part of the reason is that, as with any other skill, reading must be practiced to be maintained. A previous study found that just 45% of Americans read novels or short stories and that this percentage is dropping. Naturally if fewer are reading fewer will be able to read well. And in this age of 200-channel cable television, the Internet, multiplayer roleplaying games, satellite radio, and other distractions, there's so much for people to do other than read.

So what does that mean for our favorite genre? While a loss of reading comprehension will not hurt simple adventure stories with science fiction or fantasy trappings; it will hurt the deeper, more speculative science fiction and fantasy that includes real science, thoughtful world-building, and complex futures. Increasingly science fiction will be a niche in a declining art form – the novel. Corporate mergers in the publishing world and the desire by the big conglomerates to make book selling similar to their other fields will lead to an even greater push behind big sellers, less of a chance for authors to build a career out of small successes, and a further decline of the SF magazines.

But there is hope. Small presses and print on demand are bringing back books and authors long out of print. The Internet is making it easier than ever to find new and out-of-print books. And the huge success of Harry Potter shows that young people will read even fairly long books. Now we just have to find a way to encourage more Americans to turn off the boob tube and pick up a book.

Lost Continents (A Diversion) by -- Lee Strong, M.L.S.

A popular myth and literary device stating that one or more additional continents previously existed on Earth, generally in prehistoric times, but are now submerged at the bottom of one or more oceans. The archetypical lost continent is

Atlantis (q.v.), described by Plato in *Timaeus* and *Critias* and allegedly destroyed in 9564 BCE. Current geology considers the vertical submergence of a continental landmass as described in lost continent accounts to be impossible, and belief in the reality of lost continents is generally limited. Lost continental theory should not be confused with tectonic plate or continental drift theory (q.v.).

Lost continents are typically the seats of lost civilizations characterized by utopian lifestyles. Common features include intellectually advanced cultures, occult sciences, economic prosperity and physical comforts without the need for work, and hedonistic sexual practices. Psychologists attribute such beliefs to a combination of wish fulfillment, inaccurate understanding of legitimate scientific knowledge, and an inability to distinguish fact from fantasy.

See also: ATLANTIS, HYPERBOREA, LEMURIA, MU, NEW ORLEANS, PAN, and POLAREA.

Short Fiction: WSFAn's Discover Alternate Universe in Clubhouse (it never happened, so far as I know) by Ernest Lilley

Recently several different versions of reality have confused members of the Washington Science Fiction Association. The cause of this has been discovered to be the overlapping of alternative universes at their clubhouse. The stately WSFA Manor, located at an undisclosed location, is the former Kilgore Trout's townhouse. Mr. Trout, who's SF perennially graces this paper's bestseller list, had left his home in trust for the betterment of mankind through reading SF.

"Ever since we started holding meetings there nobody has been able to agree on the minutes." Stated a WSFAn who asked not to be named to protect his job at as a presidential advisor. "After an extensive investigation we discovered that we were getting inter-dimensional leakage from other WSFA realities. It's like being in a monkey house at times."

What were those realities like? We asked.

"Well, all I can say is that unlike our world, some of them are pretty weird. In fact, there are even worlds where Science Fiction isn't even

considered real literature, and readers skulk around in bookstores pretending to be reading mysteries and other respectable genres."

Mysteries? Respectable?

"Oh yes..I understand that in that universe the media channels are filled with police procedurals and SF is relegated to only one cable channel. Well, got to go, I'm on the Ceres shuttle up to Clavius for a meeting of the Lunar Separatists and I've got to get to National Spaceport in half an hour."

Well, thanks for talking to us.

"Sure thing. Ad Astra and all that."

Media Reviews:

Aeon Flux - Karyn Kusama (dir)

Paramount Pictures

Reviewed by Lee Strong

"I was not impressed by Aeon Flux. It was visually elegant but you could drive King Kong and a herd of apatosaurs thru the holes in the plot." -- Lee Strong

"Not to mention the holes in Charlize Theron's costume." -- John Pomeranz

All too true. Too much of this film was included for visual effect rather than for logical reasons, and willing suspension of disbelief fails.

The back story of this future flick is swiftly sketched in the opening moments. A viral plague has killed 99% of humanity and the survivors have regrouped in the elegant city of Bregna. Its apparently benevolent government masks an oppressive tyranny that is resisted by Aeon Flux and other assassins of the Monican Underground. Aeon and her four handed girl pal are dispatched to assassinate the evil Chairman Goodchild but the former falls in love with him instead and tries to protect him from the real tyrant.

Both the setting and characters are splendid spectacles but too many things just don't make a lot of sense here. The characters are elegant cardboard: superduper girl ninja assassins, misunderstood pseudo-tyrant, scheming heir apparent, and, of course, plenty of blackshirted

redshirts for the heroine to easily dispose of. Bregnan high security areas have convenient holes in walls and ceilings for Aeon to picturesquely stride or drop thru and plant her technological toys in. Some devices such as the girl pal's four hands and the Monica pseudo-telepathic communion come and go when the plot requires them. And other things such as the wall around the city and the flying laboratory are never fully explained. And the final plot twists make no sense to me because both twists assume that people who survived the end of 99% of the world are too emotionally fragile to survive another shock. It's easier to be weird than to be good, and this flaccid film proves it.

I rate Aeon Flux as 2 stars on the 5 star scale because of pure bad logic. - LS

King Kong (Peter Jackson -dir)

Wingnut/Universal Pictures, 2005

Review by Lee Gilliland

The classic story, retold by celebrated filmmaker Peter Jackson, follows an expedition to mysterious Skull Island, where a fantastic world-- and the Eighth Wonder of the World-- awaits the Depression-era explorers. But the adventure really begins when their discovery takes New York by storm.

I must admit, I'm usually left cold by remakes - my usual take is what was wrong with the thing in the first place? And then you have the extra difficulty of doing a remake of something like King Kong, one of the greatest classics of all time, and yup, you've got a problem....

Only no, you don't, not this time. This time it got done right. This is the film the way Cooper and Schoedsack would have done it had they had color film and the graphics capabilities we have now. There are very few changes in the plot - Jack Driscoll is now a well-known New York intellectual and playwright (that's how Denham convinces Ann Darrow to join the party), there is a stampede scene of brontosaurus not in the original, and Kong faces not one but three T. Rexes - and some of the original scenes that were deleted, most notably the man-sized carnivorous insects in the bottom of the abyss, have been

reintroduced (although I could have lived without that little addition. Ick). But otherwise, this is **excellent**, believable (yes, you do honestly feel an emotional connection of sorts between Darrow and Kong), fast-paced, and just plain fun.

In other words, good old-fashioned at-the-edge-of-your-seat, you're-gonna-love-this exciting movie magic. Jackson got this one perfect. Frankly, I cannot rave enough. Go see it, you'll thank me.

King Kong (Peter Jackson -dir)
Wingnut/Universal Pictures, 2005
Reviewed by Lee Strong

The 800 pound gorilla in this movie is the fact that it's a remake of a cinema classic. If it were an original production, it would be good although not great. As a remake, it's a great disappointment.

For me, the key test for judging a remake is the question: does this effort add significant value to the original concept? If the answer is No, then the remake is not worth the trouble. In my humble opinion, Peter Jackson's use of modern filmmaking technology adds a lot to the original concept, but his execution of the story subtracts most, if not all, of the added value. I therefore consider this to be an OK film, but just OK.

This version of the classic story is almost identical to the original but with different emphases on the various parts. <MAJOR PLOT SPOILER WARNING> Ethically challenged filmmaker Carl Denham wants to shoot a movie on exotic Skull Island. So he cons a shipload of sailors and movie people to the time lost location where he discovers a lost tribe, a lost city, lost dinosaurs and a lost giant gorilla. The tribe sacrifices, er, ah, introduces female lead Ann Darrow to their jungle king, and the other humans, lead by scriptwriter Jack Driscoll, explore the island to find her. Their journey is imperiled by stampeding apatosaurs and multitudes of hungry tyrannosaurs, velociraptors, labyrinthodonts, giant lampreys, giant insects, and giant mutant bats. Once they rescue, er, ah, kidnap Ann from Kong's clutches, they gas the

gorilla with conveniently available chloroform and take him back to New York City. After some politically correct stuff about artistic integrity, Kong escapes and kidnaps, er, ah, takes Ann for a holiday in Central Park and on top of the Empire State Building. Alas for young love, the odd couple is interrupted by the New York National Guard ground and air forces, which have the quaint idea that a huge and hugely destructive gorilla might be dangerous to the citizenry. Twentieth Century firepower, er, ah, beauty slays the beast.

Peter Jackson clearly added value to the original by remaking the story with modern cinematography and special effects. The whole thing is gorgeously done, and just plain easier to see than the black and white original. The actors are well chosen for their roles and I thought that they carried their roles well. The characterization was overall good with interesting characters and interactions. So far, so good.

However, Jackson then proceeded to subtract value by allowing his special effects, VERY LOUD MUSIC, and interspecies romantic implications to overpower the story. He pads the basic story out to more than 3 hours by piling on repetitive scenes until my bladder protested. In the process, he changes a sense of wonder story to an action-adventure yarn. A major scene involves a herd of apatosaurs stampeding thru a narrow canyon. Visually this just doesn't work. The apatosaurs are too wide to fit into the space Jackson forces them into. Moreover, the humans and velociraptors conduct a running chase for minute after minute while the apatosaurs are thundering around and over them. Come on, Peter! Every human and 'raptor would be smushed flat; not just your token few victims! Making the CGI nature of the creatures apparent destroys the illusion that we are seeing a real although exotic world and "willing suspension of disbelief" never recovers.

While the rescue party is running foot races, Kong fights 3 tyrannosaurs one handedly while cradling Ann in the other hand and ignoring major repeated lizard bites on his one fighting arm. Sorry! Jackie Chan might make this work

but the gorilla gets away with it by authorial fiat, not logic. These scenes are followed by more dinosaurs, giant insects and giant mutant bats until I just got tired of the whole thing. A classic case of too much of a good thing. There are other problems including a completely untrained gunner using a notoriously inaccurate Thompson submachine gun to make crack shot after crack shot, killing the giant bugs without hurting their human food, er, ah, targets until help arrives. The author-audience bargain known as “willing suspension of disbelief” requires the author or filmmaker to do everything that he can to sustain the illusion that his imaginative elements are real and in *King Kong*, Jackson has failed to do that.

Moreover, not being a fan of Stockholm syndrome where kidnap victims fall in love with their kidnappers and physical abusers, I thought the interspecies romance angle was massively overdone. I seriously thought that Darrow was going to commit suicide at the end of the film in order to be with her dead fantasy lover. If she had, this might have been a better picture and certainly would have been a more logical one.

I rate *King Kong* (2005) as 3 stars – dead average – on the 5 star scale because modern color cinematography cannot compensate for an overwrought and illogical story. – LS

Howl's Moving Castle by Diane Wynne Jones
New York: Harper Collins, 2001
Review by Colleen R. Cahill

Some themes in fairy tales are clichés, such as the dainty princess, the wicked witch and the youngest child gaining fortune over the elder siblings. The last is almost a rule and it is also what starts the fun of Diane Wynne Jones' *Howl's Moving Castle*, as a young woman discovers that many of the truths of her world might be a bit over stated. This book shines with good writing, humor, and imagination: it is one of the most original stories based on fairy tales that I have ever read.

Sophie Hatter realized early in her life that as the eldest of the three sisters, she had the least chance of succeeding in life. So she does not object when

her widowed stepmother apprentices Sophie in the family hat shop, though it is a dull life for a young woman. But when the Witch of the Waste transforms the eighteen-year-old Sophie into an old woman, she finds little to lose by setting out to into the wide world. The old do not move fast and after a few hours of travel, Sophie finds she must seek refuge in the castle of the Wizard Howl, who is known for eating the hearts of young girls. This castle is unusual because it moves, traveling back and forth above the cliffs of the town. But there is no stopping Sophie and after barging in bravely, our heroine discovers this castle is not all it seems from outside. From the decidedly small number of rooms to the fire demon, Calcifer, nothing is what she expects. Most of all, the Wizard Howl is not what she imagined: he might be powerful, but he is also selfish, vane and more than a bit erratic.

Soon Sophie finds herself in a wild and crazy adventure. While trying to help Calcifer end his contract with the Wizard, a contract that is doing neither of them much good, she discovers she has the ability to talk life into things. This gives powers to clothing she mends, to her walking stick and even affects the growth of flowers, all by her chatting to them. If she says a hat has dimpled charm, this will pass on to the woman who wears it. After accidentally enchanting one of Howl's suits to be irresistible to women, Sophie discovers he is wooing one of her sisters. And Howl never gives up until the girl is in love with him: then he dumps them. Sophie is also called on to save Howl, mostly from becoming the official royal wizard, as the King might order Howl to do some heroic deed, such as face down the Witch of the Waste. One of the things the Wizard claims to excel at is cowardice, so off Sophie goes to bad mouth him to the King.

The charm of this book is its blend of humor, mystery, and romance. Jones gently pokes fun at the “rules” of fairy tales, turning many of these on their heads. While this might be considered a young adult fantasy, I find it a perfectly wonderful adult humorous work. It has also recently been made into an anime film directed by the legendary Miyazaki, and those who have seen it (I am waiting for the DVD release) say it

is not identical to the book, but good in its own way. If you have seen the film, you should try the book to get the full literary feel of this work.

So if you like to see a few old truisms bent, folded and given a kick, pick up a copy of *Howl's Moving Castle* and enjoy the whimsy.

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire

Warner Brothers Pictures, 2005

Reviewed by Lee Strong

Harry's back, love is in the air, and so is magical menace. Life's tough in the big leagues.

I enjoyed this fourth film in J.K. Rowling's series about a young man growing up and discovering his friends, family, and future. It's definitely much darker than its predecessors but no less good. Oh, yes, and there's some magic in it as well.

The story opens appropriately enough with Harry dreaming about his nemesis, Lord Voldemort and his sinister schemes. The action then jumps to the Quidditch World Cup where Voldemort's Death Eater thugs destroy the place for sheer terrorism. Harry and his pals retreat to Hogwarts School of Wizardry and Witchcraft for their fourth academic year and apparent safety. The big event of the year is the Triwizard Tournament that brings in students from other schools of magic to compete for the big plot device, and suggests the larger dimensions of Rowling's magical universe. But! What's this? Harry's name has somehow been entered into the Goblet of Fire selection device and he's now committed to the perils of the competition! Meanwhile, Harry and his pals are now 14 years old and young love is in the air. Will Harry's luck and pluck, not to mention a few timely assists from eccentric but thoughtful Professor Madam Moody prevail over dragons, mermaids, magical mazes, and teenage hormones, as well as the supreme menace of Harry's universe, Lord Voldemort reborn?

Like its predecessors, this film is extremely well done. It doesn't explore every detail of Rowling's overstuffed novels, but does an

excellent job of capturing the main points of the plot. The filmmakers' decision to use the same actors for the continuing roles is an excellent device for maintaining continuity and the illusion that we are peeping into a consistent and realistic alternate universe. The actors are first rate and the characterizations mostly well done, especially the puppy loves, aches and thrills of teenage attractions. The cinematography is also first rate as are the location filming and special effects. Hogwarts castle is a fascinating character in its own right, and the director skillfully shows us new aspects while maintaining established continuity. Harry's world is accessible to us only thru books and films, but seems real – and really fun – nonetheless.

I rate Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire as 3.5 stars on the 5 star scale. – LS

Chronicles Of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe

Review by Drew and Katherine Bittner

It's World War II and London is burning. The four Pevensie children—Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy—are hustled out of the city into the countryside, where they're to live with an old professor. It sounds like it might be a story of life during wartime, and it is... but not the war that's taking place on Earth in the 1940s.

Trying to entertain themselves in the manor house, their game of hide and seek sends Lucy into a forbidden room occupied only by a bulky wardrobe. This freestanding closet seems like an ideal place to hide, and it is, because behind the fur coats lies a snowbound fantasy world: Narnia. Lucy goes to explore and befriends a faun named Tumnus, but then must flee when Tumnus half-heartedly betrays her to the White Witch who rules Narnia.

Lucy tells the others her story but it's only after Edmund follows her into Narnia (and is tempted into betrayal by the White Witch) that they believe her. The children find safety with a pair of talking beavers, who reveal to the children that Aslan (the legendary creator/savior of Narnia) has returned. Almost immediately afterward, an

attack by wolves sends them fleeing desperately into the wintry night.

Reunited with the Witch, Edmund tattles—at first for the sugary treat called Turkish Delight but later because he has fooled himself into believing the Witch would never really hurt them. It's only when the proof of her evil is thrust in his face—when he is dragged into her ice castle and shown her flash-frozen victims (including Tumnus and a helpful fox)—that he realizes he has allied himself with Narnia's tyrant.

Aslan, a majestic lion, has returned to muster an army of liberation. However, it will fall to the indecisive Peter, too-logical Susan, and trusting Lucy to lead that army. Aslan has another, harder task ahead, facing down the Witch in a contest of deep magic, faith and redemption.

The young actors of this movie are the true revelation of this movie. Much like Naomi Watts in KING KONG, it is Georgie Henley as Lucy who "sells" the reality of Narnia through her delight and wonderment. She has a skilled partner in James McAvoy, whose Tumnus is a conflicted and lonely creature; he knows what he must do but cannot bring himself to do it. McAvoy pulls off this schism between fear and hope remarkably well.

Skandar Keynes has a harder task than Henley, presenting Edmund as a hostile and unhappy boy who earns redemption the hard way. His scenes with Tilda Swinton demonstrate ability beyond his years. William Moseley and Anna Popplewell have less intense character moments, but strike the right tone as Peter and Susan. Likewise, Jim Broadbent only appears briefly as Professor Kirke, but his small role is nevertheless memorable and affecting.

Swinton is amazing as the Witch. She's a study in evil, glittering and beautiful on the outside but seething with venom and hatred within, a fit match for Liam Neeson (who lends his tremendous gravity to the film as the voice of Aslan). Swinton sells the reality of Aslan as confidently as Hensley sells Narnia. It seems a role she was born to play.

Ann Peacock has done a masterful job adapting C.S. Lewis's classic novel, and Andrew Adamson (Shrek, Shrek 2) moves into live action directing with confidence, skill and vision.

The battles are as epic as any in LORD OF THE RINGS, with good reason; New Zealand SFX wizards WETA created both worlds. The settings are likewise beautiful, from the drab grays and browns of wartime London to the brittle whites and silvers of frozen Narnia to (at last) the lush greens and buttery yellows of Narnia reborn into springtime.

THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA ranks with LORD OF THE RINGS in the top tier of fantasy classics. C.S. Lewis, a colleague, friend and contemporary of J.R.R. Tolkien, built his fantasy world with two major elements: Greek myth and Christian allegory. Reviewers have made a lot out of the Christian themes in this movie, but the filmmakers wisely avoid smashing the audience over the head with this subtext. The movie doesn't preach, but rather shows how love can redeem even the worst acts—and belief in oneself can save the world.

Highly recommended.

WSFA Meeting Minutes

But first...The Cat's Not Dead.

A message from Elspeth Kovar (and Fribble, the not dead cat)

Folks,

(According to the December WSFA minutes...) One of my cats had been on an iron lung AND dialysis and, while she was doing well, all things considered, subsequently died. It was rough all around and I really do appreciate the kind condolences and apologize if I took them poorly.

The thing is, I just looked down at her and asked her how she felt about her trials, tribulations, and death. To which she replied, "Myap". That could mean any number of things but given her position I expect that this time it means that she's waiting for me to stand up for any reason so that she can

steal my chair. Both she and I seem to have missed all this excitement.

She was indeed doing poorly around Capclave and I was rather stressed out: she'd been diagnosed with diabetes and we hadn't yet figured out which insulin, how much, and when to give it to her. That took a while and a number of changes until we got it right. The whole thing was very far from what anyone could call fun but really, she's healthier and, except when I travel, happier than she has been in years. Doesn't even mind the shots and sometimes doesn't even notice them.

Again, I greatly appreciate people's concern and kindness. I didn't mean to appear callous or rude, it was just that until now I simply didn't know what the heck was going on.

Elspeth

and now...on to the minutes...misguided though they may occasionally be...

First Friday - December 2, 2005

Location: The Gilliland's,

Started at: 9:15 PM - Ended at: 10:05 PM

Attendees: President: Sam Lubell, Secretary: Ernest Lilley, Trustees: Barry Newton, Elizabeth Twitchell, Lee Gilliland

Members: Alexis Gilliland, Erica Ginter, David Grimm, Paul Haggerty, Scott Hofmann, Jim Kling, Bill Lawhorn, Don Gundry, Nicki Lynch, Rich Lynch, Tom McCabe, Judy Newton, Lance Oszko, Kathi Overton, John Pomeranz, Rebecca Prather, Judy Scheiner, Sam Scheiner, George Shaner, Steve Smith, Lee Strong, Gayle Surette, Mike Taylor, Michael Watkins, Ivy Yap, Madeleine Yeh.

Visitors: Jennifer Rosebaum (2), Chris Spingob (3)

Before the meeting started, and while waiting for the President, Ernest handed out copies of the December WSFA Journal, his first as editor.

Sam Lubell called the meeting to order at 9:15 by his watch.

Previous Minutes: After a brief recap, Sam asked the Secretary to summarize the minutes of the last meeting. He did.

Committee Reports:

Treasurer's Report: No treasurer present, so there was no report on our bank account.

Capclave - Recent and Present were at SMOFcon, but Barry Newton reported on Capclave Present progress, which was that there would be a flyer ready for Philcon, but that the GOH had not been chosen and there were still a number of positions to be filled on the committee. The guests will take refreshment in the Con Suite like everyone else.

Publications Committee - Ernest reported on many subjects, from the journal, which has been printed and will be available online as soon as the new webmasters get access to the website. The former webmaster (Keith Lynch) had been notified that Paul Haggerty and Gayle Surette had taken on this job, but as of the meeting had not yet transferred the passwords (shortly after the meeting, he did so).

Future Washington continues to sell, evidentially, since it keeps moving around on the Amazon ratings list, but we're waiting for a sales report from Mike Walsh, who is our contact with the distributor. A radio appearance has been scheduled for Ernest and Colleen on the Kojo Nnamdi show on WAMU (88.5 FM) for the following Monday at 1:00 PM to discuss the book and SF in the DC area. The show will be available online afterwards at the stations archives at:

<http://www.wamu.org/programs/kn/05/12/05.php>

WSFA list - Ernest also reported on the publications subcommittee to act on the previous meeting's resolution that the WSFA list should be maintained by a WSFA member. Research was done by the committee members (Barry Newton, Steve Smith, Ernest Lilley (chair)) which indicated that setting up an off the shelf email program would be feasible in the near future, specifically after the new webmasters had a chance to settle in with the site. In the interim however, Ernest moved that we use lists on Yahoo for club announcements and discussions. Lee pointed out that she had trouble accessing Yahoo, and wondered if we might consider a Google group instead. Ernest responded that he'd thought the Yahoo group worked well for

Capclave past, as Barry had set one up, and that having checked out the relative features over the past month, he'd prefer to use Yahoo (Lee has since gotten around her access problem).

Ernest moved that we use two Yahoo lists until such time as we decided to set up our own email lists elsewhere. One list for announcements (moderated) and the other for general discussion (not-moderated except as required by the judgment of the listmaster, assigned by the secretary). Initial moderators will include the Secretary, President, and webmasters. Motion was seconded and passed without opposition or abstention.

Entertainment Committee: Alexis reported that Creationist Oral Roberts had delivered a lecture on Intelligent Design to a packed hall at Texas A&M, but had badly misjudged the sensibilities of his audience, which did not share his views.

Lee added, in the way of upcoming entertainment, that she would not be around to lead club members to a viewing of the Chronicles of Narnia, and would anyone else like to take folks to Narnia. Bill Lawhorn wondered if they were going to stay there once taken?

It was noted that there were not a lot of listings yet for King Kong's return to the screen, but that it would no doubt be big.

Sam requested a report from the committee to actually talk about science fiction from Kathi Overton, who hadn't known such a committee existed, but was happy to oblige. Discussion of recent SF short stories from Asimov's followed the meeting upstairs.

Old business: There wasn't any.

New Business: Lee moved that we set up an account at meetup.com, which was seconded. Ernest requested that we revisit it after the website settled out and Elizabeth Twitchell noted that interest in the site had been largely reduced when they adopted a paid membership policy. Lee retracted the motion for the moment.

Lee moved that we buy a wreath for the Madigan's, who are hosting the MD WSFA meetings. Some discussion ensued as to whether a religious icon of any type was appropriate and

the motion was carefully phrased to make it non-denominations. It passed with no objections, but six abstentions.

Announcements:

The Secretary asked for help with his traditional announcement, since several former secretaries were present, which requests announcements to be email/sent to him for accurate inclusion. At this writing, none have yet been received.

A survey of visitors revealed that Jennifer Rosenbaum was back for her second meeting, and Chris Spingob was back for his third. He indicated that he was interested in joining, which he is now eligible to do, but since the treasurer was not present to take his money, and new dues would be due one month hence, it was decided to table his entry into these vaunted ranks. Perhaps Ms. Rosenbaum will join us as a member in January as well.

Lee reported that a suggestion of hers had been adopted by the Arlington county library, which will now be sending email out to let people know about the availability of books they're requested.

John Pommeranz will be appearing in "Christmas Revels" (<http://www.revelsdc.org/>) for which there are eight performances: Dec. 9-11 & 16-18. it is a "celebration of the winter solstice with traditional dances, music and drama from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden." and has been well reviewed in years past.

John Pommeranz and Kathi Overton offer up their home for a fifth Friday meeting, to coincide with New Year's Eve...and hence to be held on the day following fifth Friday, Saturday December 31st.

Somebody said something about a new cat that's 3 mos old and bites. It may have been named Ginger.

Rebecca Prather announced that she would be holding a Christmas party and that she had a Christmas letter from an old friend on the NASA Voyager project, which had been scheduled for termination as the spacecraft left the interesting regions of the solar system for deep space. It turns out that it's still sending back interesting data, so it's still being listened to.

Kathi Overton said something about Robert Jordan.

Lee Strong reported that he'd seen Aeon Flux and was not impressed by its plot holes. He also reported that his agency was planning on moving to Illinois, where the town's only social center was the bar at the Holiday Inn. As he will be two months from retirement at that point, he's not wild about the move. It was suggested that he take up lodging above the town's social center.

Madeline Yeh's cake offering was in honor of Mike Walsh's birthday, though it was not that day, and he wasn't here, but it's the thought that counts.

The meeting was noisily and unanimously adjourned at 10:05pm



Third Friday – December 16, 2005

Location: The Madigan's

Started: 9:15 p **Ended:** 9:48 p

Officers: Samuel Lubell (President), Cathy Green (VP), Ernest Lilley (Secretary), Lee Gilliland (Trustee) **Members:** Mike Bartman, Carolyn Frank, Alexis Gilliland, Paul Haggerty, Jim Kling, Candy Madigan, Kit Mason, Sam Pierce, George Shaner, Steve Smith, Gayle Surrette, Ivy Yap, Madeleine Yeh, Deidre McLaughlin, Charles Divine

Visitor: Steven Sawicki

The president opened the meeting at 9:15 (by his watch). "This is the last meeting of the year. Our last chance to get it right in 2005." He quipped.

Previous Minutes: A Summary of the last meeting was read by the secretary.

Treasurer's Report: There being no treasurer, we had no treasurer's report.

Capclave Present: Capclave present (Elspeth) could not attend but Lee read an announcement concerning Elspeth's father in law had been in an accident and is paralyzed from the neck down. Also her cat died. She apologizes for not being

there but points out that Capclave is garnering a reputation as a very well run "Readercon".

Paul Haggerty reports that he and Gayle had put up the online registration form for '06 so that registration may occur. Cathy Green inquired if the guest for 06 was close to being confirmed.

Ernest pointed out that this has been an extremely tough year for Elspeth, and the club should give her as much support as possible. If her GOH choice is not available, there were several offers to put one forth.

Capclave Future: Colleen had sent an email about Capclave '07 officers were announced.

Chair Colleen Cahill

Programming: Sam Shiner, Cathy Green

Dealer's Room: Judy Shiner

Registration: Barry Newton

Publications: Sam Lubell

Hotel Liaison: Jan Price

Webmasters: Paul Haggerty, Gayle Surrette

Several other positions are as yet unfilled.

World Fantasy/Capclave Past: Mike Walsh not being present, he could not be harangued about unpaid advertising still due. Sam said he would follow up outside the meeting.

Entertainment Committee: Alexis left the picture on his desk, but it was really funny. Honest. He describes it: "It was a picture of a Weimaraner dog, dressed up with a Yarmulke, and other Hebrew artifacts arrayed. "It showed," Alexis reported, "that Jews are at least as tasteless as Gentiles." Cathy Green noted that they had not yet come up with a barking dog tribute to the dreidel song which leaves them in the lead.

Publications Committee: Ernest started by asking for journal submissions, and noted that the email address editor@wsta.org now sent items to him. He reported that the Kojo Nnamde show interview that he and Colleen Cahill had done went well, and can be heard at WAMU's website: www.wamu.org/programs/kn/05/12/05.php.

We are still looking forward to getting sales figures back from our distributor, and Ernest has

asked Mike Walsh to pursue that, Mike had sent an email to the distributor. Lee Gilliland noted that Larry Smith was selling it at Philcon and said that he's sold several copies. It was also at the WSFA table for sale.

Ernest introduced author Steve Sawicki, who contributed to the Future Washington anthology. Steve is considering a job in the DC area and was down for a few days to visit and interview. Steve has sold a number of the books at signings and has (at this writing) given us two hundred dollars in sales. (Maybe we should offer a prize for most copies sold).

Ernest turned the report over to the webmasters Paul and Gayle, who reported that the website turned out to be far more complex than ever suspected, though they're sorting it out bit by bit. They've started updating things though, including putting the December WSFA Journal on the site and redirecting the Capclave link to the '06 Con. The journal is now available online in both html and .PDF for anyone who wants to see the print layout. They are in the process of inquiring of Panix, our webhost, as to what services are available with our free account. They were chagrined to note that there are no management tools available for accounts, all requests for changes needing to go through the company. They also note performance issues with the provider. In short, they are not enjoying their Panix experience, but were doggedly pushing onward. Ernest cautioned them that we were not about to jump ship at this point Sam countered that he thought the FTP worked fairly quickly. Paul reports other issues...but they'll keep at it.

Ernest reported that the Yahoo email lists, adopted at the last meeting, had had fairly little traffic, which fell in line with Madeline's suggestion that we have a quiet period of about a month. The lists can be found by going to the Yahoo site, and searching their group's directory for WSFA. You'll also find a Wall Street group with those initials, but since it seems dead, Ernest has asked if we could take it over.

Note: if you want to access the lists directly, here are the addresses:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/wsfa-forum/>
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/wsfa-announcements/?yguid=50189375>

Lastly, Ernest reported that he had picked up the WSFA archives from Keith Lynch and was keeping them in a storage unit, which had climate control. Ernest made mention that he had made a point of thanking Keith on behalf of the Association for the tremendous amount of effort he had put in, and promised to try and do so as faithfully, if not as well.

There was some well informed grumbling about the choice and restrictions involved in using a Yahoo recoup, including the need for a Yahoo account in order to use it. One person inquired how long you could have a Yahoo account without using it, which seems to be indefinitely. Others pointed out that Yahoo has been known to make capricious changes including canceling groups for no apparent reason. Sam tasked Ernest with sending a minimum of one message a month so that the group remains active. The complaint that you could not get plain text email was floated. This does not appear to be the case however as a number of people reported having no trouble doing so. The settings are reported to be under "account management: Ernest suggested that this would make good fodder for a group discussion.

Activities Committee: A non-denominational holiday wreath was presented to the Hostess, Candy Madigan, by Lee Gilliland who had picked it out following the resolution to do so at the last meeting. Candy thanked the club and said that she could now put something on her door to let her neighbors know just how weird she was.

Lee moved on to announcements and tried to drum up support for King Kong...but none arose. T'was the holidays killed the beast this time, as everyone's schedule was full.

The Committee to Actually discuss Science Fiction not being present, it did not report. Ernest suggested that this was a worthy cause, and Lee, noting that Kathi Overton, ostensibly its chair, only came to the VA meetings, so someone else

might carry the ball in MD. It was mentioned that perhaps we could discuss Analog, since the VA discussion is limited to Asimov's. Cathy Green pointed out that the January Analog would no doubt be discussed at the next meeting.

Old Business: Rich Lynch asked if Mike Walsh was going to be contacted about the World Fantasy. Sam said it was hard to contact him, and Ernest said he could help there.

Motion: Alexis moved that we define the Mike Walsh/World Fantasy affair as "Archaic Business" and Lee seconded. No one spoke for the motion and Ernest said that though it was cute, we should probably move on. Alexis suggested that it be ruled frivolous and it was dismissed. Courteously.

New Business: No new business was brought up.

Announcements: The editor asked for news and announcements to be sent to him at editor@wsfa.org. Such announcements as are received will also be posted on the WSFA-Announcements list.

Candy Madigan made the "White bunny bites" announcement, and asked for "real, honest, feedback" on her new Oatmeal Cookie recipe. Kindra, their daughter, wrote a story for her "NaNoWriMo novel" titled, "The White Bunny Bites". (Candy reports disappointment with the Oatmeal Cookies, which did not disappear with the same rapidity as her other cookies.)

Visitors: No one admitted to being present for a first, second or third meeting.

General Announcements: Judy Lynch reported that she had been at a Mars Society meeting and heard a talk by Robert Zubrin on "Mars Direct". The society will be meeting in DC at the Plaza hotel next August 3-6. It's not cheap, but they're looking for folks to help run it.

Old Business Redux: 5th Friday will be held at the Pommeranz's to coincide with a New Year's Eve party held the Saturday after 5th Friday.

Ernest asked, Bill Lawhorn not being present to make the usual motion, that Steve Sawicki, though a guest, be appointed to the "Bill Lawhorn Chair" in order to do so. This met without objection and Steve moved we adjourn which he's wanted to do from the start.

Meeting adjourned: 9:48 pm

Correction: In the previous minutes, the question of whether or not WSFAns who went to (see) Narnia would be coming back was reported as made by Bill Lawhorn, but Judy Lynch recalls it as her question.



Events

Please email upcoming events to editor@wsfa.org with the word "submission" in the subject line for consideration.

01/01 Happy New Year – Your WSFA Dues (\$10) are due.

01/06 - First Friday Meeting: Gilliland's (VA)

01/13-15 Arisia (Con) www.arisia.org Writer GoH Allen Steele / Artist GoH Frank Wu. The Boston Park Plaza Hotel – Several WSFAns, including the journal editor, will be traveling to Dr. Smith's Mentor Planet in far northern Beantown in search of a convivial gathering. Arisia has made much of its automated con management, and we're hoping to bring back intel for Capclavians.

01/20 Premier Underworld: Evolution (Film) Vampires and Werewolves bite.

01/20 – Third Friday Meeting: Madigan's (MD) The white bunny bites too.

01/31 Nancy Jane Moore (Future Washington Author) is going to do a lunchtime presentation at the Library of Congress LC on Jan. 31st.