

THE F.A.C.T.

SHEET

June 2009

A monthly publication of the Fandom Association of Central Texas, Inc. ©2009

FROM THE EDITOR

Greetings, and thanks to all who sent content for this month's *FACT Sheet*. It's hot outside! Stay in and read books, or go out and watch movies. Either way, *FACT Sheet* wants your mini-reviews. Send 100 words or less about what you're reading and watching to factsheetgirl@yahoo.com.—Roxanne Bogucka

UPCOMING FACT EVENTS

Sat., June 13, 1:00 PM, FACT Board of Directors meeting, Carver Library, 1161 Angelina Street, Austin TX

The monthly meeting of the FACT board of directors is open to all FACT members and other individuals who have business to discuss.

North Reading Group:

Tues., June 16, 7:00 PM, Milwood Library
[Territory](#) by Emma Bull

Mon., July 6, 7:00 PM, A.T.'s House
[Lest Darkness Fall](#) by L. Sprague de Camp

CORRECTION

Lawrence Person's name was incorrectly given as Lawrence Persons last month. Factsheetgirl regrets the error.

NEWSY BITS

Scribe Award Nominations

The International Association of Media Tie-In Writers (IAMTW) has posted the nominees for the 2009 Scribe Awards at <http://www.iamtw.org/awards.html>.

From the website—"We are now accepting submissions for the Fourth Annual Scribe

Awards, which acknowledge and celebrate excellence in licensed tie-in writing—novels based on TV shows, movies, and games. Books published between January 1, 2009 and Dec. 31, 2009 are eligible."

May 2009 Poll

The question was: "How many books do you have going right now? (Pleasure reading—not for work or school)." Results: 40% have two books going, 30% have three books going, and 30% have four books going at the same time. Stay tuned for June's poll question!

WATCH THIS! Upcoming Movies

June 5—*Land of the Lost*

June 12—*Moon, Imagine That, Dead Snow*

June 19—*Year One*

June 24—*Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen*

July 1—*Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs*

July 15—*Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*

July 24—*G-Force*

CONVENTIONS

June 5-7: **SoonerCon 2009**, Biltmore Hotel, Oklahoma City, OK. Preregistration \$30
<http://www.soonercon.info>

June 26-28: **ApolloCon 2009**, Doubletree Houston Intercontinental. Preregistration \$35
<http://www.apollocon.org>

August 6-10: **AnticipationSF: the 67th World Science Fiction Convention**, Palais des congrès de Montréal, Montréal, Québec, Canada. Registration \$210
<http://www.anticipationsf.ca/English/Home>

August 14-16: **ArmadilloCon 31**, Doubletree Hotel North. Preregistration \$35
<http://www.fact.org/dillo>

August 28-30: **Bubonicon 41**, Sheraton Airport

Hotel, Albuquerque, NM. Preregistration \$36
<http://bubonicon.com>

BIRTHDAYS

June 15—John F. Moore

June 17—Clifton Davis, Carrie Richerson

July 1—Fred Duarte

July 12—Max Pinkerton

NEW SF NONFICTION

Get your scholar on!

Beech, Martin. (2009). *Terraforming: the Creating of Habitable Worlds*. NY: Springer. ISBN [0387097953](#).

Booker, M. Keith and Anne-Marie Thomas. (2009). *The Science Fiction Handbook*. Malden MA: Wiley-Blackwell. ISBN [1405162050](#).

Friedman, David D. (2008). *Future Imperfect: Technology and Freedom in an Uncertain World*. NY: Cambridge Univ. Press. ISBN [0521877326](#).

Nugent, Benjamin. (2008). *American Nerd: The Story of My People*. NY: Scribner. ISBN [0743288017](#).

Routledge Companion to Science Fiction. (2009). NY: Routledge. ISBN [0415453783](#).

Securing Outer Space. (2009). NY: Routledge. ISBN [0415460569](#).

Terminator and Philosophy: I'll Be Back Therefore I Am. (2009). Hoboken NJ: Wiley. ISBN [0470447982](#).

READING GROUP REPORTS

March 2: *Watchmen* by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons

Fifteen people attended this discussion at A.T.'s house, including one first-time attendee. At this meeting the group discussed its first graphic novel, *Watchmen*. The book is a superhero story set in an alternate version of the 1980s, and it served as the basis for the then-forthcoming film of the same name. Six of us had read Alan Moore before, and three read *Watchmen* when it was new. Thirteen of us started the book, and nine finished it. One person loved it and would recommend it to

lovers of comics. The story was deeper and broader than she expected from comics. She liked several alternate-world touches, like Robert Redford running for President instead of Reagan. She felt we knew all the characters by the end. She initially felt the all-powerful Doctor Manhattan seemed out of place with the other non-powered heroes, but gradually understood his role. She definitely felt the story was science fiction.

We loved the detailed looks into the characters.

A reader pointed out that the heroes do not consider themselves superheroes, but rather costumed vigilantes. In many ways, their costumed personas were their true identities. We felt that Doctor Manhattan was a tragic figure. He wanted to be a hero, but now is an alien.

Our favorite character was Rorschach, the character with an inkblot mask. One reader felt that he was a psychotic version of Batman. Another simply loved the segments with Rorschach's narration, which sounded like the political rants of people he knew. As one person pointed out, from Rorschach's view everything was literally black and white. Several commented on the book's political subtext. They liked the exploration of Nixon serving a fourth term, which started as a background element but later became a key element of the story. The idea of heroes working for the government was creepy but seemed realistic.

The female members of our group felt that the book's treatment of women's issues was dated. One thought the feminist themes are clichéd. Another said the women characters felt like afterthoughts. She was disturbed when one of the male costumed heroes attacks a female colleague.

We had a mixed reaction to *Tales of the Black Freighter*, the comic-within-a-comic. One person did not feel it related to the main story. Others felt that the events in *Black Freighter* were an allegory for the story of Ozymandias, one of the heroes. Some thought *Black Freighter* felt like an EC comic.

Another commented that Alan Moore likes dystopias, but doesn't like tying them up well.

He had problems with the Greater Good/Great Man theory detailed in the book.

There were comments about the art. One person liked the recurrent imagery, including the smiley face and doomsday clock. Another liked the use of color. A couple of people felt the onstage violence and gore were excessive. We generally agreed that the artist's style was not pretty, but most of us thought it was appropriate for the story. Several of us noted that the first and last images in the book are the same.

A few readers had little prior experience reading comics, and struggled with the technique of reading this book. One person read all the words and then went back and looked at the pictures, and had trouble assembling them into a coherent story. Another was often confused about the order in which to read the panels. One person was confused by the segments relating the point of view of Doctor Manhattan, who sometimes experienced things in non-chronological order. Another just gave up because it was too much work. These readers all found that the book took longer to read than expected.

One person said that the book required multiple readings to fully understand. She thought it was dense and interesting. It reminded her of difficult fiction she read as a college English major.

Overall we liked *Watchmen*, and most of us appreciated reading something different. After the meeting, many of us had a nice dinner at Waterloo Ice House.

March 17: *Gateway* by Frederik Pohl

Nine people attended this meeting at the Milwood Library, including one first-time visitor. Our topic was *Gateway*, Frederik Pohl's classic 1970s novel about exploring an ancient alien space artifact. All of us had read Pohl before. We all started and finished *Gateway*.

We liked the exploration story a great deal. The mysteries of the artifact were fascinating, and we were impressed by the risks the explorers took. The central idea of only one nonhuman intelligent civilization is novel.

Much of the exploration of the main character is presented via psychoanalysis sessions with an AI therapist. A few people commented that the therapy sessions were innovative when the book was new, but seem dated now. It shows Pohl's obvious familiarity with Eliza, the classic of early AI research. We generally did not find the main character likeable, and many complained about his whining. A reader called him "one sick puppy" and said "his relationships are like a lot of bad relationships in the 1970s." Another thought the therapy sequences provided an effective revelation of guilt and emotional baggage.

We discussed the economics of the Gateway Corporation, which sponsors the exploration. One person felt the company was strangely altruistic. Another thought it was pure capitalism.

We talked about the book's writing style. One reader commented that writing first-person narrative is difficult, but Pohl did it so effectively here that she was halfway through the book before she noticed it. Another recognized the clear New Wave influence, and appreciated how well Pohl merged New Wave and Golden Age sensibilities. Many of us loved the many informative sidebars scattered throughout the novel, and were impressed at Pohl's bravery at actually showing computer code. We found the therapy sessions were an effective framing device, and generally felt the ending paid off emotionally.

Near the end, there was some discussion of how this book fits within the body of Pohl's work. A few felt that his earlier collaborative novels with C.M. Kornbluth and Jack Williamson were his best work. Others preferred his solo novels of the 1970s, with *Gateway* and *Man Plus* being in the top rank. One member commented that Pohl's autobiography, *The Way the Future Was*, was published around the same time as *Gateway*.

Overall we liked *Gateway*. After the meeting, most of us had a nice dinner at Culver's.

—A.T. Campbell III

MINUTES OF THE APRIL MEETING OF
THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR THE
FANDOM ASSOCIATION OF CENTRAL
TEXAS

The monthly meeting of the board of directors for the Fandom Association of Central Texas was called to order on Saturday, 11 April 2009, by Board Chair Jonathan Miles at the Carver Branch of the Austin Public Library, 1161 Angelina St., Austin, Texas, at 1:04 p.m. Present in addition to the chair were Directors Elizabeth Burton, Marianne Moul, Charles Siros, William Siros and Brian Price and FACT Officer Renee Babcock. Director C. Dan Tolliver arrived at 1:27 p.m. and FACT Registrar Eric Hollas at 1:43 p.m.

The secretary presented the minutes of the March meeting. There being no additions or corrections, it was moved by Mr. W. Siros, seconded by Mr. Price they be accepted as presented. In the absence of objection, Mr. Miles declared the motion passed by acclamation.

CORRESPONDENCE: It was noted correspondence requiring the attention of the chair of ArmadilloCon had been given to Ms. Antell.

OFFICER REPORTS

CHAIR

★ Mr. Miles attended the dinner held for Peter Beagle, and noted the attendance was outstanding.

PRESIDENT

★ Ms. Meschke had a conflict of schedule and did not provide a report.

VICE-PRESIDENT

★ Mr. Price went to see *Monsters vs. Aliens*, the Price family's first outing with Jessica, which he described as an interesting experience. Otherwise, he advised he had not been involved in much FACT-related business

TREASURER

★ Ms. Moul reported that as of 3/31/2009 the FACT account balance was: \$16,473.10, with pending deposits totaling \$338.84 and outstanding debits of \$701.72. She advised she had cleared up the matter of the check to ALAMO for SMOFCon

memberships the bank refused to honor and moved Paypal deposits to the appropriate accounts. Regarding the matter of Sonia Santana's memberships having been mis-sent, the payment was allowed to lapse, and Ms. Moul contacted Ms. Santana requesting she use the link on the website to place the payment. She recommended keeping the affected memberships current until the matter is resolved.

★ Ms. Babcock reported that as of 3/31/2009 the ArmadilloCon account balance was: \$3670.14. She reported still having one transaction she is unable to account for; however, the amount in question is small and could easily be a minor error in calculation. She noted that one of the outstanding uncashed checks has been reported lost, and that she will contact Sara Felix on the same subject. The third uncashed check appears to have been sent to an artist for whom she has no contact information.

★ Ms. Babcock also had a question regarding the need for board approval of expenditures for the upcoming mass mailing. She was advised no such approval is required unless an expenditure will exceed the budgeted amount by 10% or greater.

SECRETARY

★ Ms. Burton advised that, other than compiling the resolution to change the signature policy and attending the South Reading Group she had not been much involved in FACT activities. Mr. Miles reminded her she attended the Beagle dinner, which she advised she enjoyed very much.

REGISTRAR

★ Mr. Hollas reported active members number 60. A total of 21 memberships have expired, while inactive memberships number 77. Mr. Price suggested Mr. Miles contact Kimm Antell and remind her she needs to renew her membership.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES MANAGER

★ Ms. Babcock also attended the Beagle dinner, and later advised him the first

showing of his movie was sold out, providing the opportunity for him to arrange for a second. She advised she received an email regarding gaming, which she noted seems to have fallen by the wayside. The consensus of the board was that we would like to see it continue, but moving it to a different weekend would be best. Mr. Miles recommended Ms. Babcock meet with interested parties after the meeting to discuss possibilities.

HISTORIAN

★ Mr. Tolliver reported attending AggieCon, expressing considerable dissatisfaction with all aspects of the event.

MIS

★ Mr. Campbell advised he had clarified the issue with Sonia Santana's registration by setting up an account using the email to which her payment was sent. However, it was determined the best procedure was to let that payment be refunded and request she use the website link.

★ Mr. Campbell also set up a mailing list specifically for directors and the president. Ms. Babcock expressed her concern that she knew nothing about the Beagle dinner when it was first suggested because the discussion had occurred on the board list. The board recommended Mr. Campbell establish a second list that will include all officers and committee chairs as well as directors and the president. Ms. Burton also suggested he provide an email for the social events manager to be posted as a contact on the website so in future persons offering suggestions can contact that officer directly.

PUBLICATIONS

★ There was no report.

QUARTERMASTER

★ Mr. C. Siros advised he has taken possession of the laptop donated by Mr. Price, and will seek to determine the whereabouts of the iMac and the label printer.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

ArmadilloCon

★ Ms. Antell provided a copy of the minutes of the most recent committee meeting. She noted the website is currently up to date, and that preparations are underway for the mass mailing. She inquired whether the May board meeting would be rescheduled because of its proximity to Mother's Day, but the board advised that wasn't necessary. At this time, 60-65 of those contacted for programming have agreed to attend, 15 have refused and 18 are undecided. The questionnaire will go out in mid-May, and invitations have been sent to artists. It was moved by Mr. Tolliver, seconded by Mr. C. Siros that the minutes be accepted as presented. Ayes: 6.

Hotel Committee

★ Mr. C. Siros reported the committee received bids from the Omni Southpark and the Renaissance. The general offerings are similar; The Omni contract is for 3 years, the Renaissance for two, as there is no food and beverage requirement in the contract they presented, and the Renaissance wants to retain the ability to change that depending on economic developments. The committee recommends the board accept the Renaissance offer, as there is more space and potential to expand, and there are numerous restaurants within walking distance. One drawback is the in 2011 function space won't be available till 5 p.m., but that could change if the contractee currently signed up cancels.

★ It was moved by Mr. Price, seconded by Ms. Moul that we accept the Renaissance bid. Ayes: 5, 1 abstention.

★ Mr. W. Siros suggested that in future ArmadilloCon consider doing a banquet or some similar event. Mr. C. Siros noted one of things that's becoming evident is that we are going to have to start paying for function space once the economy rebounds unless we do something that utilizes the hotel's food and beverage services.

Bylaws Committee

★ Mr. C. Siros advised there was no need for a meeting.

Membership Committee

★ Ms. Burton stated she has been swamped and so has not contacted the other members of the committee. She stated she will endeavor to correct this as soon as can be managed.

Reading Groups

★ Ms. Burton noted she now has one other person occasionally attending. The last book discussed was Neal Stephenson's *Anathem*, which both attendees stated they enjoyed immensely. The next book will be *Good Omens* by Gaiman and Pratchett.

★ The April meeting of the North Reading Group held prior to the board meeting was lightly attended, and it was noted the book choice for that session was popular.

OLD BUSINESS

1. **Party Materiel** The parties concerned will meet briefly following the board meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

1. **Signature Cards** It was moved by Mr. C. Siros, seconded by Ms. Moul that the FACT account signature cards be updated to reflect that Mr. Miles has replaced Mr. Price as the chair. Ayes, 4, 2 abstentions. The secretary will draft the necessary resolution.

2. **Checking Resolution** It was moved by Mr. C. Siros, seconded by Mr. Price that it be resolved only a single signature is required for checks the amount of which doesn't exceed \$1,999,99, and that the treasurer notify Frost Bank to implement said policy change. Ayes: 5, 1 abstention.

3. **Mass Mailing** Mr. Tolliver noted that although the implementation of this is an ArmadilloCon concern, the board needs to act on whether to include a FACT flyer and authorize funding for same. Ms. Babcock noted we would need 1,325 flyers. It was moved by Mr. C. Siros, seconded by Mr. Tolliver that a maximum of \$250 be allocated to cover the printing of flyers and a portion of the postage expense. All in favor.

Mr. C. Siros noted that, as the consensus is there will be no boat trip this year, we study how to replace it with an event more in keeping with our mission statement, such as inviting an author to speak. Directors were encouraged to ponder possibilities.

There being no other business before the board, the meeting was adjourned at 2:26 p.m.

FIRST CLASS



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The Fandom Association of Central Texas
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