
This study explored the connection between fandom and library and information science by means of a focus group and survey of individuals who are members of both fandom and the LIS community, in order to better understand the long-term effects of participating in fandom within this group. I hypothesized that participating in fandom will have in some cases provided an affinity space for LIS students and professionals to learn and practice skills usually associated with LIS professions. This proved to be true, but the most valuable aspect of fandom as suggested by the responses of study participants was social rather than skill-based.

Headings:

Fan fiction

library school students

library employees

participatory culture

affinity spaces
FANISH LIBRARIANS: THE INTERSECTION OF FANDOM AND LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE

by
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A Master’s paper submitted to the faculty of the School of Information and Library Science of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Library Science.

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Approved by

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Background Statement

In the introduction to *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture* (2006c), Henry Jenkins, one of the leading scholars in the field of media studies, describes the reactions he faced for acknowledging his personal investment in the focus of his research and “outing” himself as a fan:

the insider approach to media ethnography was embraced by many as opening up a space for more engaged writing about fan communities, but it was criticized by others for pretending to ‘have it all’ or ‘going native’ or simply ‘slumming it,’ all terms suggesting that, by definition, academics cannot be fans. (4)

As I am, in some small way, aiming to follow in his footsteps, it seems only right to note that I am also writing about an area of experience and deep personal interest; I have been writing fanfiction and posting it online for over ten years, and my experiences in fandom strongly motivated my decision to enter the field of library and information science (LIS).

Kristina Busse and Karen Hellekson provide an overview of the terminology of fandom, the catch-all term for the community and community spaces populated by fans, in the introduction to *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet* (2006), but the brief definition offered by Fanlore (an online encyclopedia of fandom, authored by fans) may prove more useful: “Fandom implies a community of people with similar interests, participating in [fan activity] and interacting in some way, whether through discussions or creative works. The interaction may be face-to-face at gatherings such as conventions, or written communication, either off- or on-line” (Fanlore). The crucial terms, therefore, are “community,” “similar interests” and “interaction.” Within fandom,
there is a subset of individuals whose fan activity is creative in nature: the broadest terminology for their creations is “transformative works.” The Organization for Transformative Works, a non-profit that advocates for fans, defines transformative works thusly: “A transformative work takes something extant and turns it into something with a new purpose, sensibility, or mode of expression” (Organization for Transformative Works). Essentially, it is a new work which in some way derives from or responds to something else that already exists.

Henry Jenkins et al. describe in *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century* (2009) how fandom centered on transformative works, among many other forms of participatory culture, can benefit young people by providing them with a motivation to acquire new skills that the current educational system does not. Rebecca W. Black (2005, 2008) has also investigated the positive effects of participating in the (English) fanfic-writing community for English as a Second Language students. However, I have yet to see a study that takes a longer view of the effects of belonging to this community by surveying the young people in fandom after they have grown up. The LIS community, which has been anecdotally observed to contain a high number of current and former members of fandom, offers an opportunity to examine any long-term effects in both a general sense and more specifically as relates to choosing to pursue a career in LIS.
Purpose

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of how participation in fandom has or has not affected the lives of LIS professionals and students, whether or not they continue to be involved in fandom. Because so little research has been done in the area of transformative works, most of which is in the fields of copyright law or media and reception studies rather than information science, this study will hopefully contribute to further research and the de-stigmatization of the fans, and advocate for the young people, especially young women, who are or may become involved in fandom so that they may enjoy the benefits of a safe affinity space in which to express their creativity.
Research Questions

1. In their own words, how do fannish librarians describe the time they spent in fandom? Was their overall experience positive or negative? What do they view as the most significant aspects, and do patterns emerge in their responses based on demographic variations (age when joining fandom, amount of time spent in fandom, level of activity in fandom, type and number of fandoms participated in, etc.)?

2. What specific types of fannish activity did they engage in (writing fiction, writing nonfiction, creating art, organizational, managerial, etc.)? Do they make distinctions between types of activity? Do they regard some as more legitimate, or more legitimately “fannish”, than others?

3. How, if at all, have their experiences in fandom influenced their adult lives and career paths?
Literature Review

1 What is fandom?

Rather like the pornography to which it is sometimes ignorantly compared, fandom may prove to be impossible to define in words to the satisfaction of all interested parties, but “I know it when I see it,” to quote the well-known line of Justice Stewart. A fandom is easily identified as a community surrounding a shared source text, whatever that source text may be, but fandom as a collective is not so easily pinned down, not least because it is still expanding. The answer to the question “what is fandom” is troublingly idiosyncratic: in my first exploratory interview my interlocutor mentioned TV Tropes (a highly successful Wiki-style website which catalogs tropes in all forms of fiction) as one of her active fandoms, and the concept of a Wiki as the center of its own fandom was, to me, both unprecedented and completely intuitive once I considered it.

Although the literature may not offer a perfectly satisfactory definition of fandom, it can and does illuminate several concepts which overlap and intersect with it, and provide vocabulary for describing, if not prescribing, what fandom is. The most important of these concepts are remix culture, participatory culture, transformative works and affinity spaces.

“Remix culture” takes its name from the musical practice of “remixing” songs, which Kirby Ferguson (2012) describes thusly: “You take existing songs, you chop them up, you transform the pieces, you combine them back together again, and you’ve got a new song, but that new song is clearly comprised [sic] of old songs.” Ferguson argues for
the broader application of the term with his provocative catch-phrase, “Everything is a remix,” contending that “copy, transform and combine” is a summary of all human creative process: we are always reliant on what came before. Lawrence Lessig approaches remix culture with an even more explicitly legal/economic agenda in his book *Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy* (2008), where he advocates changing copyright law in order to protect rather than criminalize participants in remix culture. (His presentation of the criminality of remix culture under current copyright law is, it should be pointed out, exaggerated for rhetorical effect, as Hetcher (2009) helpfully notes, following Tushnet (1997), the seminal article on the legality of fandom.) Lessig has also discussed some of the principles of remix culture in his earlier book *Free Culture* (2004), using the oppositional terminology “free culture” and “permissions culture”, as part of the debate on regulation of intellectual property. To clarify how the terminology pertains to this study, fandom is an example of a remix culture: not all remix cultures are part of fandom.

Henry Jenkins, the godfather of the field of media studies, is also the great proponent of the term “participatory culture.” In the white paper he co-authored in 2006, participatory culture is defined as:

a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one’s creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices. A participatory culture is also one in which members believe their contributions matter, and feel some degree of social connection with one another (at the least they care what other people think about what they have created) (3).

Fandom is explicitly included as a subheading under “expressions” among the forms of participatory culture, the others being affiliations, collaborative problem-solving and circulations – although here, as throughout the literature, we can see an excess of
terminology coming to the forefront, as what Jenkins describes as “expressions” are precisely the products of Lessig and Ferguson’s remix culture. One might therefore conceptualize both fandom and remix culture as included in participatory culture, while participatory culture has various aspects which are not included in either fandom or remix culture. However, there are aspects of participatory culture, especially the social connections between members, which are very important in fandom but are not prioritized in the paradigm of remix culture. This may be partly accounted for by the fact that remix culture is a concept brought into the spotlight by legal and economic interests, while participatory culture is examined to explain a social and developmental phenomenon.

“Transformative works” is the term, as used here, most closely affiliated with the elusive definition of fandom. The Organization for Transformative Works (OTW), a nonprofit that advocates on behalf of fans and fan culture, defines a transformative work as one that “takes something extant and turns it into something with a new purpose, sensibility, or mode of expression. Transformative works include but are not limited to fanfiction, real person fiction, fan vids, and fan art” (Organization for Transformative Works). Transformative works, to connect back to the other concepts already defined, are the objects produced by remix culture and the expressions of participatory culture. The etymology of the term is highly significant, as it was consciously chosen by the OTW (in place of other common terms at the time of their founding, such as “derivative” or “appropriative” works) in order to evoke U.S. copyright law: the “transformative” nature of the work is considered in the legal judgment of whether fair use has been made of copyrighted material.
Finally, James Paul Gee (2004) takes a slightly different approach in his conceptualization of “affinity space”, moving away from culture, community and their byproducts to focus on the physical or virtual space which they inhabit: he defines an affinity space as “a place or set of places where people affiliate with others based primarily on shared activities, interests, and goals, not shared race, class culture, ethnicity, or gender” (67). The vagueness of the usage of “fandom” as a term can perhaps be best seen in the fact that it is both an affinity space (although not all affinity spaces are fannish) and the community/culture which inhabits it.

Fandom is: an example of a remix culture, a subcategory of participatory culture, a producer of transformative works and a type of affinity space.

2 Who are fans?
In Derecho’s (2006) historical and theoretical overview of fanfiction, she writes very movingly about fanfiction as “a genre that has a long history of appealing to women and minorities, individuals on the cultural margins who used archontic [her preferred word for “derivative” or “appropriative”; “transformative” was not in common use at the time] writing as a means to express not only their narrative creativity, but their criticism of social and political inequities as well” (76). While this is not equally true of all forms and areas of fandom, transformative works can serve as a vital outlet for populations who feel that their voices are unheard in the mass media, or even that they have been silenced. Coppa and Tushnet (2011), for instance, explore the difference between the reactions of female-dominated and male-dominated areas of the fanvidding community to exposure to the public eye in their article “How to suppress women’s remix.” They found that while
the anime music video and Machinima (videos based on video games) communities actively courted outside attention, female vidders instead sought to keep their creations within their own group of like-minded fans, fearing (with good reason, as it turned out) that their art form would be misunderstood and ridiculed by outsiders and suppressed by the owners of the canonical material they were subverting.

The literature acknowledges (not always at the same time) the existence of two intersecting groups of fans in particular need of the expressive outlet fandom provides. While Jenkins, Clinton, Purushotma, Robison & Weigel (2009) focus on the developmental needs of teenagers, who must speak and hear themselves in order to express (and by expressing, create) their identity, the Organization for Transformative Works proudly acknowledges its history and current status as a predominantly female community, giving a voice and an audience to a vast and diverse group that has long been stigmatized because of its gender. Teen girls, doubly in need of this expressive outlet, unfortunately (but unsurprisingly) are targeted by the doubly stigmatized stereotype of the fangirl: “the defining characteristic of a Fangirl... is that her love for a particular thing is obsessive yet shallow” (TV Tropes). The need to decouple fandom from its stigma is thus particularly pressing for the benefit of this population.

The fear of being stigmatized in this way also presents itself repeatedly in Lee’s (2011) interviews with five writers in the Time Traveller’s Wife fandom, in which she sought to explore their motivation for writing fanfiction. She was unable to discover any one universal motivation, although some themes were recurrent: desire for more of the source material, desire to fix the source material, the opportunity to articulate and analyze reactions to the source material, the ability to improve as a writer, and the sense of
community created by shared interests with other writers. Comparisons with Nardi, Schiano and Gumbrecht’s study on motivations for blogging (2004) help keep perspective, however, by highlighting the fact that many of these motivations are not specific to fanfiction or fandom. The fear of discovery and stigma is unique to the medium of fandom, despite the fact that the motivation to improve one’s skills or share one’s passion with a wider audience is relatable to other, non-stigmatized activities.

3 How does participating in fandom affect fans?

There is a substantial amount of literature attesting to the positive effect fandom participation can have on young people, especially young women. Hayes & Gee (2009) describe how a young girl, “Jade”, gained technical skills, self-confidence and increased status among her peers both online and in real life after she taught herself to design clothing for characters in her favorite computer game. Black’s (2005 and 2008) studies of young English Language Learners who post their fanfiction to fanfiction.net looked at how the community and affinity space of fanfiction.net helped authors who are not native speakers of English form mentorship bonds with each other and improve their English writing. Henry Jenkins (2006a and 2006b) looked at a small sample of young writers, especially young women, who developed new skills and were empowered by fannish activities, and the wild journey on which fandom sent one girl, Heather Lawver, culminating in her triumph in a high-profile legal battle with the copyright holders of her source text. One trouble with the existing literature in this area, however, is a tendency to conflate acquiring specific skills with acquiring confidence or higher status, and to insufficiently account for the benefits accrued simply by belonging to a welcoming and
accepting community. There is also a dearth of long-view study of the effects of fandom participation: teenagers, however candid about the changes they perceive in themselves, cannot predict how they will continue (or not continue) to change in the future. This study will attempt to fill in some of these gaps.
Research Design and Methods

Exploratory research, according to Schutt (2009), “seeks to find out how people get along in the setting under question, what meanings they give to their actions, and what issues concern them” (14). This is done by collecting large quantities of relatively unstructured data and then determining the common themes by which said data can be classified. Because of the relative lack of prior research on fandom, I determined this to be the most appropriate mode in which to approach my study.

My study was mainly qualitative in nature, in fitting with its exploratory purpose. I employed both a focus group and an online survey, although not concurrently, in order to collect my data. I first conducted a small (6 member) focus group of local LIS students and professionals with personal experience in fandom in order to develop a sense of their diverse experiences. The group was asked to consider a series of general questions about their experiences in fandom and in LIS (a full transcript is available in the appendices); they were also informed that I would bear their responses in mind as I completed the design of my online survey in order to determine what consensus, if any, can be sought about what are the important questions to ask on this topic. I was very conscious of the possibility that I might prejudice my findings by relying on my own idiosyncratic experiences in the intersection of fandom and librarianship, and was therefore anxious to incorporate as many voices as possible before reaching out to a wider population. Participants were recruited via an email to the dedicated student listserv of the UNC
Chapel Hill School of Information and Library Science, the text of which can be found in the appendices.

The online survey was, like the focus group, intended to gather information about what participants considered to be the important aspects of the topic. It consisted of a series of closed-ended questions about demographic information and the specific activities respondents took part in, which were intended in part to help respondents reflect upon what they actually do in fandom and in LIS, followed by open-ended questions about the benefits, drawbacks, and effects of fandom. I used Qualtrics software to construct and host my survey, and disseminated it through a network commonly used by both members of fandom and LIS students and professionals in order to approach both groups in their own “space”: the popular microblogging website Tumblr (www.tumblr.com). In addition to its user base, the design of the website is especially suited to the act of distributing a survey; it combines the community-building aspect of social media (different users “follow” each other’s accounts in order to view their posts on an aggregated “dashboard” and can “like” or “reblog” specific posts in order to show their interest or approval; in the case of reblogging the original post will then be shown on the dashboards of all the followers of the user who reblogs it, with any additional commentary that user sees fit to provide) with topical discovery (posts can be tagged, and those tags can be searched or “tracked” by users who are interested in a particular topic). I created an account on Tumblr (www.fannishlibrarians.tumblr.com), posted an invitation to participate in my survey, and tagged it with the relevant terms: fandom, librarians, libraries, tumblarians (the moniker, a portmanteau constructed from “Tumblr librarians,” used by the community of librarians on Tumblr to refer to themselves) and fandom
studies. The post was then reblogged by interested users and passed on to their followers. At the time the survey closed this post had been liked or reblogged 53 times, and the survey had received 154 at least partially usable responses.

Maintaining the privacy of all research participants was, of course, a particular ethical care, as fandom can still be a stigmatized activity, especially for government workers and professionals who work with children and young adults. The online survey did not collect personal identifying information such as names, email addresses, locations or affiliated institutions; the only pieces of demographic information requested were age and gender. Due to the constraints of the focus group format, however, the anonymity of participants in that stage of the study could not be guaranteed. This was made explicit in the invitation to attend and was repeated at the beginning of the focus group meeting. Although pseudonyms for study participants are used throughout this paper and all potentially identifying details have been removed from the transcript, the size of the pool of local LIS students and professionals means that focus group members may potentially still be recognized by neighbor LIS-affiliates who were solicited to participate and declined, and they are of course known to other focus group members. The text of all invitations to participate in the study, a transcript of the focus group discussion and the online survey can be found in the appendices.
Findings and Discussion

1 Demographics

A total of 154 survey responses were coded in order to produce the following data, as well as the comments of a six-person focus group. One hundred and forty-four survey respondents were female; ten were male (of whom one identified himself as female-to-male transgender); and the remaining two identified as genderqueer. All six focus group members were female. Since both fandom and LIS are female-dominated fields, this overwhelmingly female group of study participants is not in and of itself a sign of a skewed sample. The age of survey respondents ranged from 19 to 63; the average age was 33, the mode was 26, and the median was 30.
Survey respondents were asked to identify their affiliation(s) with LIS: the most common choice, unsurprisingly, was “librarian” (45%, 69/154). Thirty-eight percent (58/154) had obtained a degree in information and/or library science, twenty-nine percent (44/154) were library paraprofessionals, twenty-one percent (33/154) had begun a degree in information and/or library science but not yet completed it, and fifteen percent (23/154) had formerly worked in a library but did not currently. A further 8% (12/154) were library volunteers and 3% (5/154) were archivists. The only responses which were explicitly unconnected with the library portion of LIS were the 11% (17/154) who worked as information specialists or had done so in the past but did not currently. A final 3% (5/154) did not fit into any broader category. All of the focus group participants were in the process of obtaining an LIS degree.
Survey respondents were also asked to identify all the fannish activities they participated in. Activities were not grouped in any particular fashion on the survey, but I have divided them into five general types: primarily creative activities (fanfic, fanart, fanvids, fanmixes, filk, cosplay, podficcing, roleplaying, making prompts), of which 83% respondents reported doing at least one, primarily organizational activities (recs, primers, bookmarking, tag wrangling, moderating, website hosting and/or design, zines, fandom wikis) of which 84% respondents reported doing at least one, primarily analytical activities (betaing, meta, academic work on fandom), of which 54% respondents reported doing at least one, primarily social (leaving comments, attending cons), of which 72% of respondents reported doing at least one, and primarily passive behavior, or lurking, which only 8% of respondents reported.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Types of fannish activity</th>
<th>Respondent participation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creative (fanfic, fanart, fanvids, fanmixes, filk, cosplay, podficcing, roleplaying, making prompts)</td>
<td>83% (61%, 25%, 8%, 16%, 6%, 28%, 2%, 38%, 30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational (recs, primers, bookmarking, tag wrangling, moderating,</td>
<td>84% (44%, 5%, 74%, 8%, 21%, 11%, 5%, 8%)</td>
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[Graph showing LIS affiliations of survey respondents]
These are inherently flawed and reductionist categories, as many if not all of the activities mentioned can fall into more than one – the act of writing fanfiction, for example, is by nature creative, but may also be analytical if it comments on flaws in the source material in addition to telling a story about it, and is often also a social gesture, given that a piece of fanfiction is intended to be read by other fans. The so-called gift economy of fandom makes this social aspect even more explicit: the products of many creative, analytical and even organizational activities are offered and received as presents between members of fandom. However, for simplicity’s sake I have classed each activity into the category to which I believe it primarily belongs. Perhaps the most interesting take-away from this exercise is that although fandom is generally considered first and foremost a creative activity, the LIS-affiliated population who responded to the survey was ever so slightly more likely to participate in an organizational capacity. Without access to data regarding the activities of other members of fandom in general, of course, it is impossible to say for certain whether this is an unusual pattern.

2 Emerging themes

Outside of demographic information, most of the data used in this study come from the final three open-ended questions of the online survey, which asked what the respondent felt were the drawbacks and benefits of fandom, as well as how participating
in fandom had impacted their life. Taken together, the responses to these questions address the broader question of what the long-term effect of being in fandom is.

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<th>Themes</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tr>
<td>stigma/closeting</td>
<td>45%</td>
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<tr>
<td>unpleasant interactions with other people</td>
<td>32%</td>
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<tr>
<td>loss of time, money, energy, etc.</td>
<td>27%</td>
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<tr>
<td>fear of real-life consequences</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>validation of interests</td>
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<tr>
<td>awareness of social issues</td>
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<td>technological skills and awareness</td>
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<td>critical analysis</td>
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<td>writing and language skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>creative outlet</td>
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<tr>
<td>influences career</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>exposure to new experiences, ideas, places</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>socialization and people skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sense of community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>made friends and/or found romantic partner</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>cope with difficult situations in real life</td>
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<td>stigma/closeting</td>
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A number of recurrent themes emerged. In the category of negative consequences, respondents repeatedly mentioned the stigma associated with fandom and the feeling of being “closeted” as a consequence of not being able to share their activities with non-fannish acquaintances (45%); interactions with other fans who behave in an insular or just plain unpleasant fashion (32%); the loss of time, money and energy which could have been spent on other, “more productive” activities (27%); and the fear of severely negative consequences (e.g. being fired) if their fandom activities became publicly known (6%).

Among the more positive effects, respondents listed: meeting friends or romantic partners (59%); the sense of community and being around like-minded people (43%); the opportunity to have new experiences and explore new ideas and places (32%); an
influence on their career (28%); the availability of a creative outlet (26%); the opportunity to improve writing and language skills (19%); a space in which to become better socialized and gain people skills (15%); a chance to develop greater facility with critical thinking and analysis (12%); increased skill with and awareness of technology (11%); and the validation of their interests regardless of how those interests are viewed by mainstream culture (8%). A small number also mentioned that fandom had increased their awareness of various social issues such as racism, homophobia, sexism, etc. (5%), that fandom had helped them cope with difficult situations in real life (4%), or that as a result of fandom they felt more comfortable with their personal identity (3%).

2.1 Friendship and community

The most common theme in the survey responses about the effect of fandom participation (85 of 145 total responses to this section of the survey mentioned this, or about 59%) was that they had made friends or even met a spouse through fandom. The interpersonal relationships formed in fandom are clearly deeply significant to members. Related but not synonymous is the theme of community, which was referenced by 63 respondents (43%); friendships aside, finding a “welcoming environment” or meeting “like-minded people” is a benefit in and of itself. Many respondents also mentioned that this benefit was particularly welcome as they (or fannish people in general) often have difficulty finding this sort of community in the outside world:

Fandom participation is an excellent way to build community.... It's easy to make connections with people in fandom because there is an assumption of mutual interest.

Fandom has given me a sense of community and belonging when I could not find one in my "real" life.
Fandom can lead to meeting many good friends, instilling a sense of community amongst people who often need a sense of belonging...

There's a community that builds up around these things, made up of people that understand you and that you don't have to explain yourself to.

There's also the camaraderie of people with common interests (particularly when we often feel out of place among outsiders).

While the fact that it is easier to become friends with or just talk to strangers when there is a common interest between you may seem obvious, it remains worthy of comment. Nor are the bonds formed in this way trivial. Nowhere is this made more apparent than in the responses (thankfully few) which state that fandom helped them cope with health crises, depression and even thoughts of suicide. These relationships and communities are real and have real impact despite often being conducted entirely online.

2.2 Socialization and development/practice of people skills

Related to but separate from the community aspect of fandom is the fact that being part of a community necessitates interacting with other people. Several responses list learning to navigate complex social situations as a benefit and far more describe encountering toxic personalities as a drawback to fandom participation; fandom is not a utopian community composed exclusively of pure-hearted, like-minded people. However, to a population that contains a number of introverted personalities, it presents an opportunity to practice social skills which they may not have had (or may not have wanted to utilize) before. Handling both positive and negative social interactions is a skill that needs to be practiced. In particular, however, fandom provides a space in which
members are not only able but *motivated* to practice these skills, because they are
interested and invested in the discussion:

Participating in fandoms can be a great way for shy people, like myself, to learn
how to communicate in a closed environment. If I was uncomfortable, I could
leave the forum, page, discussion, etc., which isn’t always possible in real life.
But, by being emotionally invested in the fandom I discussed, I was more apt to
stay and discuss and participate with others, and I learned to work harder for
things I wanted to say.

I think [fandom] helps me make better connections with people. Being so invested
in fictional people translates to real people.

Fandom also creates communities where individuals can feel comfortable
entering, as they know they already have a strong common interest to discuss with
others in the fandom, helping to develop friendships. Sometimes these friendships
can provide worldwide networks for individuals, bringing understanding and
acceptance on a worldwide scale.... Since I began participating in fandoms, I've
come to understand that, had I never done so, I never would have blossomed into
the social, people-loving person that I am today. Before, I was a quiet, introverted,
self-esteem lacking child, and now I am a talkative, confident woman, and though
my generally introverted nature will probably remain, I have a much easier time
reaching out and creating bonds with new people.

[One benefit of fandom is] a sense of community. It really helps people who have
social anxiety connect to others.

As is often the case of participating in a community, you learn to navigate dealing
with a variety of personalities and viewpoints [in fandom] including addressing
what might be sensitive topics.

I have often found that fandom gives us introverts an excuse to get the
conversation started, which can lead to conversations about all sorts of "real life"
issues and experiences. I feel like it's almost a secret language of communicating
to someone that you're predisposed to actually care deeply about things, and that
you might be someone safe to confide in.

Generally speaking, when we speak of learning in affinity spaces we are referring to
learning concrete skills, but social skills can be acquired in the same way. Fandom offers
a safe(r) space and a reason to *want* to learn to interact with other people, which are key
ingredients in the learning process.
2.2.1 Management

I wanted to highlight separately one subset of the social skills which can be learned or practiced in fandom. Leadership is not the same thing as socialization or collaboration among equals – but it can be learned by caring enough about a project to take it over, just as social discourse can be learned by caring enough about a discussion to join in. Survey responses suggest that leadership skills, like social skills, can carry over from fandom into non-virtual space:

I am a leader in my local steampunk community and feel that that has given me confidence and leadership skills. I may perhaps be willing to go in to management some day and that would be due to my fandom experiences.

You learn a lot about crowd management if you're a BNF or a mod, which is a useful skill.

Note that, as in the physical world, there are both official and unofficial positions of power in fandom. A mod (moderator) holds power by virtue of her control of the online space in which other fans congregate; a BNF (Big Name Fan) is an opinion leader in her community, often because her contributions (creative, analytical, organizational, social, or any combination thereof) are highly valued by other fans and so she has a large audience.

2.3 Open-mindedness and exposure to new experiences, ideas and places

In order to make new friends, one must first meet new people. And with new people, especially in a global community, come new perspectives. Because fandom communities are not based on geography and there is a relatively low cost barrier to
participation (internet access is not a negligible requirement, but it isn’t crippledly high, either), it is possible to encounter people from a very wide variety of backgrounds, all of whom interact freely with each other. The result, respondents suggest, is increased knowledge about the world and greater tolerance of the differences of other people:

[Fandom] has also taught me to be a lot more accepting of people as I often run into people with different interests, who look different, think differently, etc. than most people in my little pocket of the world.

[Fandom] has given me friends in many different parts of the country. It has also opened new knowledge of other cultures and beliefs.

Fandom has also opened me up to new ways of thinking about things – from characterizations, motivations, or sexuality (let's be honest, fandom LOVES its ships) – and that kind of flexible thinking has made me second guess or change my mind when I think about some of the real life problems and characters I interact with.

[Fandom has provided an] introduction to music, books, art, media, cultures, ideas, and people I love that I wouldn't otherwise have had ready access to. These things have made my life richer in many ways.

Fandom for me seems to lead to learning about a broader range of topics than you would normally encounter in "everyday" life.

[Because of fandom, I am] more open and accepting of other people, more open and accepting of new experiences and interests.

Greater knowledge benefits the individual, but greater tolerance benefits society in general as well.

2.3.1 Awareness of social justice issues and activism

Why does one individual’s exposure to new ideas benefit society? To start, it leads to awareness for society’s privileged of a number of problems in the world that they may never have had reason to consider before:

I feel like my involvement in fandom has pushed me to think critically about gender and race, and well as general cultural representations we have.
I also think that fandom has taught me things especially about social issues that have crossed over into my real life.

I also think fandom has influenced my politics and views on tolerance and religion and history in a way my immediate physical circle of acquaintances have not (fandom has widened my horizons, while my non-fannish life is a conservative, highly insular family).

I learned about aspects of life as a political and a social [entity], which I might not otherwise have ever been exposed to: feminism, politics, racism, intersectionality. As far as we all need to go in these areas, I think it is very safe to say that my outlook on the world in a global context has been fundamentally altered by my involvement in fandom.

[Fandom] gives me a frame work for several things that are becoming more common and more understood in regular life, such as what fandom has not so kindly called the Social Justice group. Whatever their faults, the fact that these debates happened in fandom has been eye-opening for me and has provided me with resources and contacts that are not specifically library related but have a *lot* of library uses. My University has a huge variety of people and my experiences through fandom can provide a better way for me to interact with cultures and issues that are not my own, but can at least understand in a way that many of my fellow librarians cannot.... Reading about an issue can teach you many things, this is true, but actually interacting with someone who has gone through a particular issue, or has a radically different approach (and here's why...) can be incredibly intellectually stimulating.

Fandom is not some utopian place where no one is ever hurtful or offensive to each other; indeed, one respondent specifically noted that fandom has the full raft of social justice problems represented: “Racism, sexism, homophobia, queer baiting, transphobia, etc. It's all there in fandom.” But at the same time, just the fact that these issues are being discussed, that people have learned the terminology to describe them, is a step forward. If some fans are learning from these discussions and gaining empathy for each other, as the above respondents clearly are, all the better!
2.4 Development of concrete skills
The most easily measured effect of fandom, and thus the one most frequently discussed in the literature, is the acquisition of concrete skills that can be applied in real-world contexts. As with social skills, the motivation to develop these skills is key: it is possible to learn them elsewhere, but the existence of a community where they are valued as a source of social capital may make them more desirable and worthy of effort.

2.4.1 Writing and language
Perhaps because fanfiction is the most visible manifestation of what is considered transformative fandom today, the awareness that participating in fandom (or, more specifically, writing fanfiction) can help improve writing and language skills is fairly widespread. Jenkins alludes to this idea directly in the title of his 2006 article, “Why Heather Can Write,” and since the explosion onto the publishing scene of E.L. James’ 2011 novel *Fifty Shades of Grey*, which was originally written as fanfiction of the popular YA *Twilight* series, the idea of fandom as a place to practice writing has been firmly established even in mainstream culture. Unsurprisingly, therefore, writing and language skills were the most commonly mentioned by respondents:

All I’ve ever wanted to be is a novelist and writing fan fiction allowed me to work on my writing in a low-stakes environment.

Writing fanfiction has helped me become better at writing “real” fiction because I’ve gotten lots of quality feedback that has helped me improve my pacing, characterization, etc.

[Fandom] inspired me to continue writing my own fiction (knowing that I’m not as bad as the worst and not as good as the best gives me both reassurance and challenge).

[One benefit of fandom is improving my] grasp of foreign languages (as in most of fandom is very much English language, and English is a foreign language to me :-)

If you can manage it, becoming a part of fandom can inflate (and deflate, to a certain extent) your confidence, both in yourself and in your writing. It gives you a (relatively) safe place to hone your craft, whether it be written word or artistic, and despite what I mentioned before, fandoms are (generally) a very accepting place for someone just starting out. You learn to give your creativity free-range, and by reading/examining what other people have produced, you can teach yourself how to do certain things.

A welcoming and interested community is a tremendous encouragement to write and keep writing; depending on the situation, peers can be a source of confidence-building praise or valuable constructive criticism, or both. Respondents take it as given that fandom is a place where other people will read what they have written, which is perhaps the most important contributing factor to fandom’s value in the learning process.

2.4.2 Critical analysis

Less frequently mentioned in the literature – perhaps because reading is seen as a less active skill than writing – is the fact that participating in fandom entails critical thinking more often than composition. Critical analysis is a part of consuming both fanworks and the original source material, and may also involve forms of literacy other than textual – understanding the stylistic reference points for fanart or noticing the tropes commonly used in television shows, for instance. Furthermore, fandom provides a venue for critical analysis (referred to within fandom as “meta”) with a larger audience and a much lower level of formality than schools, which is where this skill is most commonly taught and expected to be employed.

[Fandom] also teaches critical textual reading - especially in discussions of characterization/plot/etc and writing up meta - and encourages engagement with texts.... My critical reading skills have improved from analysis, and I have been encouraged to not only write meta, but to present it at conventions and engage both my academic and fannish interests at the same time.
I think fandom has cultivated my analytic relationship with media. I find myself more actively involved with things I consume (for pleasure or in academic settings) and think fandom helped foster that attitude.

As part of my fandom experience, I analyze media critically. I look for patterns and foreshadowing in everything I read or watch. It has also made me more aware of seemingly minor details in written formats. This has helped influence my ability to analyze historical documents, an activity central to my field of study.

I think fandom is a perfect entry into the concepts of literary criticism, textual analysis, and intertextuality, which I think are important skills that can definitely be learned without relying exclusively on written texts, especially when so many kids high school teachers are trying to get these ideas through to are already acquainted with these concepts through fandom, they just don't have the names for it.

As the final study participant notes, these concepts are present in many more areas of life than the texts used in English class; understanding and practicing them is a valuable skill in and of itself, even if it is rare to see them discussed explicitly in everyday life.

2.4.3 Technology

In this digital age, being comfortable with a wide variety of technological skills has become increasingly important. Fandom, as a community which for the most part congregates online, is most strongly associated with the skills involved in web design and development, such as the ability to use HTML and CSS, and familiarity with online tools:

For instance, learning HTML for posts in one's blog can be useful in professional activities... Maintaining a LiveJournal allowed me to have the skills needed to be on two different blog committees at my library.

I think there is a definite concrete benefit in skill appreciation from participating in fandom. Fandom is where I first learned to code, how to manipulate photos and images...

My early interest in creating fan sites gave me the building blocks of web design, graphic design, and photography skills that I use daily in my work.
I started designing websites because of fandom. I learned CSS because I wanted to modify my LJ.

A lot of the technology I've taught myself to use, I did initially because I wanted to do something fannish and it's helped in my RL job.

I spend a great deal of time consuming fannish things (both media fandom and sports fandom). It's greatly influenced my adoption of newer technologies. It [accelerated] my adoption of Twitter and other social media applications, as well as helping me feel more familiar with other kinds of technology.

A raft of other technologies with more specific applications than web design – video editing software, tools for digitally altering visual images, voice recording equipment, etc. – are also used by individuals in the course of their fannish activities, although less frequently. As the final response suggests, in addition to enabling people to learn and practice various technological skills, fandom can alert them to the existence of various technologies that may be useful in other contexts.

### 2.5 LIS-related aspects

A significant number of respondents commented that participating in fandom had influenced their careers not (or not only) because of library-specific skills but rather because of networking with other fans, who had informed them of job openings, written references, and even hired them directly. While networking is a valuable skill without which many LIS professionals would not be employed, it is nearly impossible to separate out from the related themes of friendship and social skills, and so I have not included a section about it. Some respondents also reported that fandom had helped them gain skills that crossed over to their LIS-unrelated employment – as a writer, for instance, or a craft vendor. My main interest, however, is in responses which described how fandom is related to an LIS-related job. The analytical and organizational skills honed in fandom
can be applied to a number of tasks associated with libraries and information management, for instance. In some instances not only skills learned in fandom, but simply being known to belong to a fandom, can be an asset.

2.5.1 Concepts and applications of information theory

The most immediate learning ground for LIS concepts in fandom which comes to mind is a very narrow one: tag wrangling. Tag wranglers are one of the most helpful and beloved features of the Archive of Our Own (AO3); they are responsible for retroactively “wrangling” the folksonomies used by community members when tagging their submissions to the archive into a searchable controlled vocabulary. Some community moderators on other websites may perform a similar function, depending on the needs of their members. The primary community for fanvidding on Livejournal (vidding.livejournal.com), for instance, periodically invites members to help tag backlogged entries, and other communities may have a system for members to use in order to alert a moderator that his or her assistance is required to correctly tag an entry. Tag wrangling is not like cataloging: it is cataloging. Interestingly (and perhaps unsurprisingly), while there is no other correlation I could discover between the types of fannish and LIS activities survey respondents participate in, nine of the thirteen tag wranglers who responded (69%) were also catalogers, compared to only 56% of all respondents who listed cataloging or organization of information among their LIS tasks.

Information theory is present in fandom more broadly than the very small example of tag wrangling, of course. Respondents mention concerns with categorizing, searching, using metadata, archiving, and reference and research:
[Fandom] gives first hand experience with the difficulties of tagging rather than controlled vocabulary, searching, and serving a community's needs. It also provides a testing ground for some metadata concepts.

[Fandom] has also underscored, for me, the importance of information studies because goddamn trying to organize fanworks is like herding really ornery cats.

...being in fandom made me think about the preservation of information and text and the open communication of ideas in ways that literally NONE of my universities ever did. Fandom is built upon ephemera, and it is our constant struggle to not let older fandoms fade away, and that has definitely influenced my career choices, and my view of information itself.

...a lot of my college research and reference work has at least a little bit of a start in fandom (obsessively researching and categorizing things)...

Ultimately fandom is a very large body of information, all of which provokes the same concerns and can be manipulated in the same ways as any other information. Being personally invested in the fate of that information, however, is excellent motivation to learn.

### 2.5.2 Collection development and readers’ advisory

Conceptually, readers’ advisory is very closely linked to the practice in fandom referred to as “reccing” (making recommendations, usually of fanworks for other fans), which several participants pointed out. Recs may be personalized for an individual recipient, like readers’ advisory, or aimed at a more general audience, but in either case they often highlight the best or most salient aspects of a work, and certainly being able to break down a work into its relevant components is a useful skill to have when doing readers’ advisory:

Being familiar with aspects of fandom (series, characters, plots) has also helped with work; I'm better able to help patrons find what they're looking for, recommend new things or just discuss a common interest leading to a better [rapport] with them.
[Fandom] seems to be very related to Readers' Advisory, which I love. When someone says they like a particular type of program, movie, etc., I can suggest something else they might be interested in. If someone is lamenting the end of Buffy, for instance, I will recommend they try Supernatural; if they liked MST, I'd recommend Doctor Who.

Other responses suggest that fandom can be relevant to readers’ advisory (and to some extent collection development) simply because it leads to being better informed about patrons’ interests:

[Fandom] led to my acting as head of reader's advisory at one library I worked at because my reading was wider than any of the other managers in the library.

I think [fandom] has helped me be better informed about popular culture, which helps me with collection development and readers advisory.

There is an implied assumption which lies behind that statement, namely that fandom is related to pop culture, which is often but not always the case, but at any rate, reading more widely in any genre is potentially helpful for readers’ advisory.

2.5.3 Youth services
The final area of LIS related to fandom which appeared repeatedly in responses has less to do with what fandom is and more to do with who fans are: a surprising number of school and youth services librarians said that fandom helped them bond with the children and teens they worked with.

I work with kids and especially teens at the library and it really gives us something to bond over and talk about all the time.

Well, my real life currently involves spending a lot of my time with teenagers in a school setting, and my future real life will ideally see me spending a lot of my time with teenagers in a public library setting, so understanding fandom helps there, since so many teenagers begin engaging with fandom, and even those who don't engage with fandom have things that they care about passionately, often pop
cultural things, and understanding that mentality and being able to share in it is definitely helpful.

[Fandom is] a way to connect with the fandom-involved teens I work with, who are often surprised to realize that "an old person" knows about fandom and doesn't look down on it.

As a school librarian, the kids I interact with love that I understand fandom.

...in my workplace, [fandom provides] a way to connect with the students.

I like to support and display my interests, so I have fandom [merchandise] that I bring to work, which provides a point of contact for students to talk to me, which is great.

I say “surprising” in part because the fear of negative consequences (such as, for example, being fired) if one’s fandom involvement became publicly known was also a theme in the responses, if a less prevalent one, and in part because the assumption that fandom is an activity designed for children and teenagers is fairly well disproved by the existence of so many adult librarians who are involved in it! However, this certainly does not negate the presence of children and teenagers in fandom, either – indeed, the majority of respondents reported joining fandom as a child or a teenager, and fandom has only become accessible at a younger and younger age over time as barriers to internet access drop – and so it does make sense that there are fannish teens and children who are happy to discover that an authority figure like a librarian shares their interests.
Summary of Findings

“Fannish librarians” are an almost exclusively female group, and range widely in age. They are most likely to take part in fandom in an organizational and/or creative mode, followed by social and then analytical, and are extremely unlikely to participate in a purely passive fashion. When asked to describe the drawbacks, benefits, and life-influencing aspects of fandom, they mentioned: the stigma associated with fandom and the feeling of being “closeted” as a consequence of not being able to share their activities with non-fannish acquaintances; interactions with other fans who behave in an insular or just plain unpleasant fashion; the loss of time, money and energy which could have been spent on other, “more productive” activities; the fear of severely negative consequences (e.g. being fired) if their fandom activities became publicly known; meeting friends or romantic partners; the sense of community and like-minded people; the opportunity to have new experiences and explore new ideas and places; an influence on their career; the availability of a creative outlet; the opportunity to improve writing and language skills; a space in which to become better socialized and gain people skills; a chance to develop greater facility with critical thinking and analysis; increased skill with and awareness of technology; and the validation of their interests regardless of how those interests are viewed by mainstream culture.
Conclusions

This was primarily an exploratory study, making it difficult to base assumptions upon the data collected, especially ones generalizable to a broader population. That said, there are some areas where tentative conclusions can be established, always bearing in mind that they may or may not apply to either fandom or LIS as a whole.

First of all, as the literature suggests, fandom is potentially valuable as both a social and learning environment, and should be honored as such rather than stigmatized. The skills that can be acquired in fandom are varied and often can be applied elsewhere, including in the workplace, yet fandom members are often afraid to let outsiders know that they are in fandom at all: this is counter-productive for all parties involved, and yet is not likely to change in the near future.

Despite the power of the argument for fandom’s value on the basis of its educational uses, it is important to acknowledge that to members of fandom, its greatest value is social. This coincides with Jenkins et al. (2009) and Gee’s (2004) points on the social nature of participatory culture and affinity spaces: they are so powerful specifically because they combine creating and learning with a community that acknowledges and values the resulting creations and skills. To most fandom members, however, the social aspects are not in service of creativity and education; on the contrary, creativity and education are byproducts of being social. This is potentially true of any group based on a common interest, but fandom is such a remarkably large and diverse community that the effects are magnified.
Finally, the idea that fandom is a place or activity for teenagers, which is implicitly promoted by literature which focuses on the value of fandom specifically for teens, is, while not inaccurate, misleadingly incomplete. Adults can and do benefit from participating in fandom, just as teenagers do. While teenagers have special developmental needs that fandom can help address, adults also need socialization and can acquire or practice new skills. Labeling fandom as “something for teenagers” will only increase stigma in the long run, and de-stigmatizing fandom should be a goal.
Future Research

I believe there’s a great deal of potential research in this area: this is a field wide open for further exploration! It would be very helpful to have a much broader survey audience to see if there really is an unusually high number of “fannish” people in LIS fields, and to see what other professions have a similarly high incidence of fandom involvement. Such a study would also be able to determine if the types of fannish behaviors exhibited by LIS students and professionals are consistent with those of the broader population, or if they are in any way conditioned by their LIS association.

It would be useful to get more detailed demographics (race, sexual orientation, etc.) specifically of fannish librarians to see if incidence of non-whiteness and non-heteronormativity is higher than the average in the general LIS population. It would also be interesting to see research that specifically explored how fannish librarians viewed the female dominance of their spaces, since this was not addressed in the responses to my study but was very obvious in the demographics of participants. If possible, it would also be revealing to conduct a similar study with only former fandom members; current fandom members are presumably biased in favor of fandom’s benefits, and while participants in this study had no difficulty thinking of negative aspects of fandom, it would still be useful to get the different perspective of those who had at one time belonged to that community but had since left.
Bibliography


Organization for Transformative Works. What do you mean by a transformative work?


Appendix A: Supplementary Documents

1 Recruitment Message (Focus Group)
IRB Study #13-0127

Hello!

My name is Veronica Koven-Matasy, and I am a second-year Masters student at the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. As part of my degree requirements I am conducting a research study on members of the library and information science community (such as librarians, library students, library paraprofessionals, information management specialists, and people who have worked or studied in these fields but no longer do so) who have been or are involved in fandom (writing or reading fanfiction, creating any form of fanart, making primers and recs, writing meta or articles for fandom wikis, etc.), and if you belong to this group I would be very grateful for your participation!

I am currently looking for potential participants in a single three-hour focus group in order to get a better idea of how other “fannish librarians” view the intersection of LIS and fandom. The focus group will be videorecorded in order to make a transcript, after which the videorecording will be destroyed. Please note that while I will attach pseudonyms to all quotes in the transcript and any published report based on this study, I cannot guarantee the anonymity of the members of the focus group.
If you are interested in taking part in this focus group, please email v.koven.matasy@gmail.com with your availability to meet in Chapel Hill during the week of February 18-25. Thank you very much for your time!

2 Recruitment Message (Online Survey)

Hello!

My name is Veronica Koven-Matasy, and I am a second-year Masters student at the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. As part of my degree requirements I am conducting a research study which will include a survey of members of the library and information science community (such as librarians, library students, library paraprofessionals, information management specialists, and people who have worked or studied in these fields but no longer do so) who have been or are involved in fandom (writing or reading fanfiction, creating any form of fanart, making primers and recs, writing meta or articles for fandom wikis, etc.). If you belong to this group I would be very grateful for your participation! It is my hope that by carrying out this study I will be able to explore the intersection of fandom and library and information science, as well as the long-term effects of fandom participation.

My survey will collect no personal identifying data in order to preserve the anonymity of participants, and you will not be contacted for any further studies. If you are interested in taking this survey, please click on the following [link]. It should take no more than fifteen minutes of your time, and you are free to skip any question or leave the page at any time. Thank you very much!
Question 1: In the interests of everybody getting to know each other, can we go around and say what our first experiences in fandom were, how old were you, what fandoms are you talking about, what kind of fandoms, what kind of activities?

7: When I was in sixth grade I participated in a Tamora Pierce roleplaying game, which –
6: Oh wait, which character?

7: No no no, we made up our own. And I think I had some horrible Mary Sue where I was the Shang Unicorn and I had magic eyes or something like that, it was pretty terrible. [laughter]

5: Tortall.

7: Tortall, yeah. So in retrospect I think that was my first fannish activity, although I didn’t think of it as such at the time, and then when I was in eighth grade I discovered Harry Potter fandom –

5: Didn’t we all?

7: Down the rabbit hole for me. And then the Lord of the Rings movies, so book fandoms, mostly, at the beginning.

6: I somewhat agree, I don’t quite remember when I started being a fan but I do remember the exact moment I found fanfiction.net. I was in the public library and I was at the computer and you were trying to find something fannish and I was at that minute into InuYasha, like mad into InuYasha – I’m an anime fan, comic book/anime fan, that’s my OTP. And I was sitting at the computer and my little sister comes up and says, “Hey, I know you’re looking for something, a friend of mine happens to know this site, here try this, and she typed it in for me and I just fell in love and I was like oh my god this is the best thing ever so I’ve been always on fanfiction.net. Archive of Our Own is relatively new to me because of the tagging system. I don’t understand tags very well, it’s not something I’ve ever entered into, so I slightly leave it alone. I venture now into Archive of Our Own every once in a while but fanfiction.net has been the mainstay for me. Again most of my fandoms have been anime related or comic book related.

6. I think the Avengers are really big on Archive of Our Own.
5. Those are huge.
6. Those aren’t on fanfic.net I don’t think as much.
5. It is slightly if you go to the comic section. The movie however section is definitely up on AO3, I think it’s called.
4. I guess I was obsessed with Buffy the Vampire Slayer in middle school and high school, I guess I’m revealing my age now. Actually at the time there were not very many people I knew who watched it, which I know seems unbelievable, but then that became more and more a part of my life. I started looking for stuff about it and I discovered this site, Television Without Pity. I don’t know if you guys know it –
6. What is it?
4. It’s a site that recaps shows, episodes of shows, and in a snarky way, makes fun of them.
1. To the point where if you don’t really like the show… or if you do particularly like a show it might not be the best place – they could crush your feelings to a tiny hole of despair.
4: The thing is they showed actually a great respect for Buffy in the first few seasons and as the show went downhill it helped to go to someplace that understood what my feelings were, this show that I loved and they were destroying the characters. And through that site I discovered fanfiction.net and I read some fic that was way better than the show at the time and then I also discovered that people made music videos. That was the coolest thing in the world to me, so I decided to try and make a couple of my own. And people should check them out because they’re awesome.
3. I discovered fandom when I was probably – it was in the break between book four and book five of Harry Potter, the giant abyss. I was probably a freshman or sophomore in high school, I can’t remember exactly when it was. I basically found it through Livejournal and the Harry Potter community on Livejournal. Somebody was like, check this out, it’s fanfiction. The first fanfiction I ever read was After the End on Sugar Quill, and after that I joined the – this makes me feel so old – I joined Yahoo!Groups about all my ships and we’d send each other fanfiction and everyone would review it in the Yahoo!Group. I didn’t know anybody in real life that was in fandom. All my friends knew about it because of me but they all just thought I was weird. So I would just print out pages of fanfiction and read them while I was in school.
5. You weren’t alone.
7. I did too, yeah.
5. You were not alone.
3. That was my intro, it was Harry Potter, and then I branched out from there.
7. So you were on Livejournal before being in fandom?
3. Yup.
7. How’d you get into Livejournal?
3. Uh, a friend of mine – well, the new girl in school, who had her hair all dyed crazy and some piercings, she moved here from Florida and she had a Livejournal and no one in my school knew what a Livejournal was. She was like, “I could give you a code,” and I was like, “you have to have a code to get in? I want a code.” So I got my Livejournal in September of 2001 and I’m pretty sure I didn’t get into fandom until the next year.

2. I’m kind of odd, I’ve basically left fandom at this point in my life, which is – you never leave, it’s always in my heart, but I just don’t spend any time on it anymore. When the internet first started I started getting into fandom. I was part of the X-Files fandom while that was still on TV via AOL and after that I moved on to ‘60s music fandom. The Beatles, and the Monkees to a certain extent, I participated in [their] fandom. And at a certain point if you were into stuff that happened way in the past – there’s not new stuff coming out and fan music is not quite the same as fanfiction. So I eventually got bored and dropped out of that particular one. I have read some Harry Potter fanfic, I love it, but it’s not anything like it was. I’m one of those people who learned how to make websites so I could make X-Files fan websites. That was my experience.

5. We love you people, by the way.

7. Yeah.

5. You were technically not only pioneers but you guys were the ones we came to first. Or at least I did. The first ones I tended to go to were little sites that had someone’s writing on them because I wanted to read them so badly, so… more power to you.

1. I did not know there was fandom. I only knew that I liked Roswell, the TV show, but I didn’t particularly like the tone the show was setting. So I stumbled over Crashtown.com, which was where people would post awful Roswell fanfiction, and I thought it was just an isolated place to go and hang out after school. I didn’t have to read a book, I could just read on the internet, it was great! I don’t think I knew about other fandoms until I was in college, when I was watching Battlestar Galactica and then I discovered Livejournal and a variety of communities. I’ve never been to fanfiction.net – it’s never really entered into my scheme.

6. There’s some scary things there.

5. But there’s also some amazing stuff.

6. There is, you just have to find it.

5. It’s finding it. And usually actually the way you find it is you find one and you link into that author and whatever that author has favorited, you go through that thing and then you start doing that to many others and suddenly you find a plethora of great stuff – and some not so great.

6. I think it’s fairly new that you can sort by hits but that’s not always reliable.

7. Can you do that?

6. Oh yeah, you can sort by hits now. It’s new, you also limit it by when it’s been updated and so on.

7. I wonder if they did that because of the AO3.
3. I’m sure they did.
6. Yeah, they did.
2. Because of what?
5. AO3, the Archive of Our Own.
7. It’s the big panfandom archive that’s run by the Organization for Transformative Works, so it’s owned by a nonprofit that swears they will never ever ever ever ever put up advertising or do anything with your data, “we want to have it so fans can have it.” Which is cool but they keep trying to modify things so they have tag filtering and all kinds of –
1. Which I really appreciate.
7. It’s great. Once you get used to it it’s really great.
1. I read Inception fanfiction and really, sometimes I’m not into Arthur and Eames.
[laughter]
7. It’s all there is, it’s all there is!
1. I just don’t want to see Arthur/Eames pop up on my list and so the filtering with the tags really helps to limit the amount of Arthur and Eames fanfiction that pops up.
7. Personally it wouldn’t have occurred to me until they created it that this was a thing that I wanted, but now that it is a thing that I can have, it’s so great!
1. I really more than anything want there to be an “exclude” so I can just exclude Arthur/Eames.
7. I think you can if you go into advanced search somehow but I don’t really know how to do it.
1. I’m going to try that out.
6. I know there’s something you can do so it’ll just not show the summary, it'll just say “this has this tag you’ve marked exclude,” but I don’t know about it. The hard thing is people don’t always use the same tags so that can cause issues sometimes
7. I have a huge fanboner for the AO3 and their tagwrangling system. They’re like, OK, you can tag it as anything you want, but someone’s going to come through afterward and be the official cataloger and be like, ‘OK, but what you meant by this is this,’ and make the tag a synonym for that, so if someone searches for Spock/Uhura and it’s tagged Spock/Nyota or whatever, it’ll still show up because they’re like, actually what this tag means is this parent tag.
1. And I would say they keep pretty up to date.
4. So it’s like controlled vocabulary?
7. Yeah, it’s this combination of folksonomy and controlled vocabulary, it’s so great!
5. I wanted to ask a question, too, you guys kind of alluded to middle school and high school for the actualization of, “oh, I’m a fan!”-type thing, is that kind of true for most of us, all of us? I think it was it was about middle school, high school, yeah.
6. High school.
3. High school.
2. I started in elementary school.
5. You did.
7. You’re ahead of the curve, man.
2. I was a lonely child, man.
7. I think I first started identifying in middle school, high school. I guess that is approximately the age for…
3. That’s about when that kind of thing started being big on the internet for us to find, I guess.
7. That’s true.
3. It’s all around the same age.
5. I think so. The internet, you definitely alluded to it, when the internet really became allowed for us.
3. Because now kids get into it earlier, kids know what fandom is and know how to – I feel like we had to figure it out on our own, like, “oh, there’s this thing I guess we can do?”
4. There’s communities to share.
3. I think whether or not they participate they still know that it exists.
7. I don’t know that we’ll ever actually figure out for us how much of it was it we hit that certain age and how much of it was the internet hit that certain age. Because there was pre-internet fandom but you couldn’t be in that unless you were a grown-up.
7. Yeah, I know, but you had to be able to mail away for fanzines and stuff, you can’t do that when you’re in high school, you don’t have the funds.
5. I think it stems from the RPGs, role playing games. I think so, Dungeons and Dragons, the Dungeonmaster, they create a world. I honestly think some of this stems from that, because what are we doing? Technically as a fan we’re taking a world that’s already been created and just kind of messing with it.
6. It’s just such an old phenomenon, though. You can seriously go back to Pamela, 18th century novels, and people wrote fanfic about that all the time, they just didn’t get it published usually. It was so big at that time, though, I feel like it’s not so much new, just new how we’re expressing it.
7. Yeah, definitely. And we do have – RPGs are a thing that exploded once the internet was a thing. I don’t know, aside from that brief dip into Tamora Pierce RPGs I don’t have much experience with it but I know it’s a big –
5. It’s still big –
7. – community, which is pretty cool I think. Has anyone done one of the Harry Potter ones?

3. I would watch them.

7. I did read some of them.

3. I was too nervous to sign up.

6. I’m a lurker.

2. Back in the day we used to have roleplaying in chatrooms.

3. I actually have done that recently.

7. That’s definitely – I’m trying to remember now if I’ve done that.

3. That’s more like just roleplaying rather than a roleplaying game. I’ll just dress up as this character and hit buttons on Omegle until I find somebody else I can –

6. People still do that.

3. That’s what I’m saying, I did that last month.

5. Cosplay.

**Question 2: When, how and why did you first get interested in information and library science?**

7. Two years ago – no, that’s a lie, in college, I was like, “oh, that’s a job you can have where you deal with books a lot and recommend books for other people to read? That’s pretty awesome.”

6. For me it’s kind of a hard question to answer because I didn’t really decide on this until maybe junior or senior year of college, but it’s the type of thing that, once I said it, people said, “why have you not realized this earlier?” It’s kind of hard to answer because I’ve always loved books, I’ve always loved libraries, it kind of came naturally.

5. I knew from elementary school I was going to be a librarian. I still remember every library I’ve ever been into and my favorite is still the elementary school library because the librarian in there was the creepiest, most skeleton woman I have ever met, with the thick glasses, and she was amazing. Absolutely amazing, I was scared to death of her. But when all the other elementary students were still in *Babar* world I actually crossed over into CS Lewis and stuff like *The Junkyard Dog* and just all manner of chapter books before everyone else, because I wanted to read and I read everything. And she just said, “you know what, enough,” and she pulled out for me *Arabian Nights*. I love that book, it’s the most amazing collection of stories I’ve ever read and I knew I wanted to be a librarian just because – it’s so cliché – I wanted to read but I also liked talking about my books with other people.

6. I have book friends.

7. So many book friends.
4. For me it never occurred to me to be a librarian until after I got laid off. I started volunteering at a library and it took a few months to kick in but I realized, I like this, and there were other people who volunteered who had gone to library school or were in library school and they started telling me, and I was like, “you go to school to be a librarian?” And the more they told me the more it seemed to fit, liking books, liking talking about books, recommending books to other people, all of that. I thought maybe this is what I should do.

7. Was it mostly the books, or the atmosphere, or the people you were with?

4. I guess it was the atmosphere, maybe, because you’re going to have books in the library but the people that came in and talking to the patrons and working with other volunteers, I just really enjoyed that experience.

3. Well, I was also one of those kids that was always in the library – I still have my library card from 1999 from my hometown library – and I didn’t really think about it. In undergrad I majored in creative writing so it was not a real degree –

7. It’s a real degree!

3. I mean, but – people would be like, “what you gonna do with that?” and I’d be like, “I dunno,” and when I graduated I was thinking through jobs I would like to have that had something to do with books and/or writing. One of my friends worked in the library in town and I was like, “I’m gonna get a job there just to see,” and when I told my family, “I think I’d like to go to library school but I wanna make an informed decision and do all the research first and get a job there first to figure it out,” they were like, “don’t you think that sentence means you should just be a librarian?” and I was like, “maybe.” And yeah I worked in a library for two years, and yup I wanna do this, but I didn’t let myself believe it until after I’d tried it.

7. Same question, what was it about being in the library that you liked?

3. Even just being in them makes me feel a little giddy, just the feeling of it, being around the books and stuff. I really do like helping kids, specifically youth services, because I worked in circulation first and I was like, that was all right, and then I moved to youth services and I really liked helping kids find books and doing programs with teens and all that stuff. It’s really fun and I like having a job that I could go to every day and be excited about. It’s fun, it’s cool.

2. So I’m not actually in library science. I guess I heard about the information science program – I didn’t even know that was a thing, I heard it from a guy who had my job before I came here, he had my same job and then he came to I School. He had a decent job when he came back to work to visit and I was like, “wow, how do you get a decent job?” “Well, here’s how you do it!” So I applied. I’ve always been interested in techie kind of stuff, I did communications studies and concentrated in media studies and production, mainly production, when I was an undergraduate, so I know about multimedia stuff and we did a few websites and things for that curriculum. So I guess I just knew I was kind of decent at it and got interested in how it fit.

7. I’m going to show my LS degree ignorance here. What kind of jobs do you get with an IS degree? What kind of thing are you interested in?
2. Anything I can find around this area, but it’s a hard area to find a job. It’s really difficult because people are coming to recruit from all over and it’s very competitive, so… I still don’t know. I don’t really enjoy a lot of tech stuff but it seems like there’s a better chance of me getting a tech job than anything else at this point in my life. I could see myself maybe as a database administrator, maybe. But that is just all nights and weekends gone forever. I don’t know. Something that doesn’t kill my soul. The guy I mentioned, who I know who graduated from the IS program, went back and got an MBA and he’s a project manager now. Project management sounds fun. I would do that. I think I would. Sounds like a lot of herding people – herding with a d, not a t – well, maybe a little of that.

1. I also graduated with a creative writing degree and knew I wasn’t going to get a job with that, I was very well aware. In fear of my student loan corporations coming to find me I just decided to go to graduate school and I got my degree in children’s literature. So I liked it, it was fun, it was interesting, it was what I was good at. I was thinking that I wanted to be a librarian so I tried out a year of Americorps running a bookmobile, which was a large eye-opener in how much I did not actually like children. While I was there I began volunteering in a couple of public libraries, doing basic grunt working, shelf reading, checking stuff in and out, finding lost books, putting things away. As much as I enjoy the public library, and I do genuinely enjoy the public library, I only enjoy it when it’s run well, and too much time with teenagers is just too much time with teenagers. They just don’t stop talking. They never shut up. I like people to shut up. You’re not supposed to tell them to shut up. So I decided that an academic librarian track was probably more for me and that to soothe my soul with needing to be involved in public libraries I would just continue to volunteer and be a little grunt helper and then one day when I’m fifty I can retire and hopefully have paid off my student loans and then I can get a job in a public library and do what I really want to do. I do not genuinely enjoy being in libraries by and large; I like to take my books and scurry away. I don’t like people, they’re annoying. I have to fight for the books that I want.

7. So what about a well-run library do you like?

1. Being behind the circulation desk where I can take books away from you and put them in my own backpack and where I can eliminate my fines. I like the power behind the circulation desk, to be perfectly honest with you.

5. That’s awesome.

1. I’ll be totally honest

7. We like honesty!

3. That’s funny, because when I was talking about how much I love being in a library, I was picturing me, by myself in a library.

1. See?

3. I know, I hate people. I love teenagers, but –

1. I like them in very small, select doses.

3. I can’t get enough. But I don’t know, yeah, libraries…
1. I think they’re really important and I get really upset when they’re run improperly—as when I go into a library and their teen section is—god, is it Lauren or Lola or Laura McDowell, the cancer novelist—

3, 5, 6 & 7. Lurlene McDaniels!

1. And when that’s it, it’s just her—I’m leaving, I’m never coming back. No. We’re not doing this. How many youth are in your area that don’t have access to any kind of adequate reading material? You’re giving them cancer books. Thank you, God bless.

6. I read all of them in sixth grade.

1. And it’s not that I didn’t read them, but when your collection is stagnant in the 1980s and the 1990s, I’m going to walk up to the circulation desk and slap you because you have the budget and you don’t need any more Janet Evanovich novels, which—I do still love Janet Evanovich, but buy a fucking new book.

7. It’s funny, when I daydream about my perfect library it’s gonna be a small place where I can control everything.

1. Are there people in your library?

7. Sure, but I get to fix the cataloging and make sure everything is shelved exactly the way I want it shelved.

1. I bet!

5. My place looks absolutely chaotic compared to you guys, absolutely chaotic. There’s going to be nothing but fiction in my library, by the way, I don’t care what kind of fiction, it will be fiction. No nonfiction, all of you craftspeople can go away. I don’t want a craft section—it’s amazing, grab your own library. I want fiction fiction fiction, and the youth section will be as big as the adult section and as big as the children’s section. It’s going to be just equal, it has to be equal. And then I’m going to have trees with treehouses for kids to climb on.

1. You have a lot of money here, don’t you?

5. I am dreaming big!

6. I think for me, just for what I would enjoy in a library is different from what I enjoy as a librarian. When I go to the library I just go and grab my books and I usually leave, unless there’s nowhere else to sit or something. But usually I grab the books and go. So what I’m actually thinking is it’s odd how many things I’d do differently. I definitely would want people in my library when I’m a librarian, not so much as a patron.

7. I guess to have the “show up and grab your books and go” there needs to be this whole invisible structure in place, all the books are shelved and everything.


7. Maybe the better question is what is your dream job, what would it look like?

1. To read all day, write readers’ advisory and pay off my creditors in a very timely fashion. That’s my dream job. I don’t have to leave my house, I can be in my jammies, nobody cares how fat I am, it’s perfect.
6. I kind of want to second that.

7. Has anybody else not answered the “when I rule the world, given an unlimited budget…”

4. I always wanted a treehouse as a kid. Or like, nooks or something for kids to go off in small corners.

6. I just think it would be awesome to have a library of fantasy books. It would be amazing.

7. That would be cool, you could have a specialty library, like you could have a specialty book store/

6. I mean this would never happen, but that would be my library. And we’d have all the different genres and subgenres –

1. No no no, if you can have adult bookstores, one day we can have just-fantasy libraries.

5. There you go.

6. All these genres and subgenres and I’d have stickers so if you have two different genres –

7. This is urban fantasy AND it’s a fairy tale retelling AND it’s a strong female protagonist AND it’s a love triangle –

6. – and it would be beautiful.

7. I feel like you could make a database that would have all of this. I don’t know how you would shelve it.

4. Shelving you’d have to make a decision.

1. You could do a bookbot system.

7. Aww, sweet.

1. You do a bookbot system where nobody can touch your shelving and you just know that it’s in bin one and you just pull it out by its tag. You just know what’s in it.

4. Yeah, see, I want my patrons to be able to browse. That’s how you discover new things randomly.

3. But there’s no robots.

5. You can have the greeting robot. “Hi, welcome to the library. Go sit down.”

1. And then you wouldn’t have to greet people.

5. And you wouldn’t have to talk to anyone! “How can I help you today?” “I need option B,” point, “go over there.”

6. I don’t know. I would love to talk to people. If they’re coming to my fantasy library we would have things to talk about. If someone was coming here talking about crafts I probably would not know anything about that, so I could kind of help but I wouldn’t connect with their need very much.
7. I love it when people come in and they’re like, “oh, I’m looking for this one specific graphic novel,” and I can be like, “yeah, so you need to read this and you need to read that.” It’s so much better when they want a thing that you’re interested in.

6. Even if you don’t really like exactly what they’re looking for, you can point out things that are like them.

2. I think user interface design would be pretty cool. I’m extremely critical of that kind of thing.

1. Clear that up for me? I only know the on button on the computer. What is user interface design?

2. Basically just trying to optimize understandability and improve interaction, with mainly websites. Lots of different interfaces. Anything on the computer with an interface.

4. Making it as user friendly as possible, as intuitive.

5. If you could find a way to optimize the public library website I would hire you in a split second, because some of those websites are god-awful and they’re full of things that are not needed for your patron. There’s something inherently wrong with some of them, and I don’t know what.

1. You could do consulting work for that.

5. I would even hire you for consulting because you said critical and I want critical for this.

1. Schools would probably really want consulting.

2. Oh yeah, send a site and I’ll give you my opinion. I’m very good at picking things apart.

5. That’s definitely something you should consider, because some of them…

7. To give them their credit, a lot of the time they don’t have a choice about it.

5. That’s very, very true, some of them are bought websites.


5. I understand that.

3. Like the school system website, or the branch/county website.

5. And I completely understand that, but if we could find someone to consult and go to that level and say, “if you need this, this is what you need to do,” that would make our lives dreamy.

**Question 3:** How do you feel that you have been affected by whatever you’ve done in fandom? Do you think it was a positive influence, a negative influence, it wasn’t an influence, in any way how has it impacted you?

1. I think I didn’t commit suicide when I was a teenager.

5. There you go.
1. Fandom gives a lot a lot of quiet, unhelped kids a place to go and have community and be safe. And I think that’s something we’re really still struggling with as a society, a place to go and be safe. Fandom in all its varieties, whether you’re making videos or you’re writing fanfiction or you’re doing art, whatever it is, it’s offering you a place.

5. For strength?

1. Yeah. And it’s not to say that it’s always safe. There’s always going to be bullies and harsh critics.

3. And people that tag their hate.

1. But I think it lends itself to – if you’re that kid in high school who’s got no place to go, then that is sometimes a great place to go.

4. On the internet you can be however you want to be, you can be yourself.

6. I think it’s also a place to see things that aren’t mainstream. I know I actually discovered I wasn’t straight through fandom. I’m a panromantic asexual, which I didn’t even know existed until I found it in fandom. So it was really helpful for me. I came across it and it kind of seemed fitting there, like, “oh my god, this kind of works.” At least for me, it was kind of – because a lot of fans you don’t really see elsewhere.

7. That’s definitely – there’s a whole bunch of stuff where I didn’t know that existed until I read that fic.

6. Sometimes good, sometimes “oh no.”

7. Let’s not talk about Teen Wolf fandom right now.

5. I’m going to go off on kind of what you said, too, it’s not just for those who are lonely or those that don’t fit in, it’s also for those who want to try something new. I love to read – I didn’t realize I wanted to write so badly until I was reading this stuff and going, “I can do better.” Don’t get me wrong, there’s some amazing stuff out there. I would love to emulate and be as good as some of these writers and I can’t, so I need to find my own style. And my own style I’ve had people tell my everything from, “what the fuck are you doing, you bad person” and I’m like “delete,” and then you go to the ones that are saying, “you know, I really like your style, you have just a little bit of a problem with your conclusion, it’s never strong enough,” or something like that. I can deal with that; that’s constructive criticism and that helps me become that much better. In fact, because I’ve been on fanfiction[.net] for so long, writing on fanfiction[.net], I’ve seen an absolute progression in my stories, it’s amazing. Oh my god. From like age thirteen on up. I’m embarrassed beyond belief for some of the stuff from when I was an early teen, but at the same time I never erased it. It’s there.

4. And it feels good to look back and see how much better you got.

5. I’ve even contemplated going back and just saying, revise, and keeping the old stuff but going “version 2.0” and that type of thing. I think for that particular set of people that go in just because they want to try something or they found a new passion, either writing or art or MVs, all manner of things. And you’re right, you get to meet people and that’s a lot of fun.
3. I guess finding groups of like-minded people and finding new information – I guess you guys already said this – but going that extra step of not feeling like you’re so strange in being – you’re not a minority in that. Once I stumbled upon this information about sexuality, gender identity and stuff like that, if you’re in a group with people where that’s not a thing – I certainly talked about that kind of stuff with people on the internet before I told my real life friends. It was a safe spot to start that discussion, figure out that stuff about yourself and then branch out to the rest of the world.

5. And somehow reading it helps your own reflection on stuff like sexual identity. I can honestly say there was no information in the public library systems, or not very much. You’re at that one age where you’re like, “I’m not going to the public library, everybody knows this section is devoted to sex and all that jazz and they’re going to look at me and they’re going to judge me.” It’s a little easier if you can see a fairy tale character going through something where that sounds familiar.

3. Although maybe to come on the other end of that I sometimes find myself forgetting that the rest of the world is not as forgiving as fandom, and I’ll be halfway through some story and somebody will be like “what?” and “oh right, this isn’t the internet, I can’t just say this stuff about myself, that’s weird in real life.” Which now I’m over and I think it’s funny because I don’t really care who knows what about me, but I’ve definitely been at a party, halfway through some story, and realized “oh right, this is not normal for the rest of the world.” But they had a learning experience.

7. Maybe it should be more normal.

4. It’s a way of bringing stuff to people who aren’t in fandom, necessarily.

1. I think that was new to me coming to library school. I had never seen such a group of people who knew about fandom, they were in fandom. I was like, holy shit, where have all these people been all my life?

3. That’s how I felt! We had a day like that in class –

7. Yeah, I remember this day.

3. We all had to say what our reading styles were like when we were teenagers, and we were paired up and I remember with my partner, I was like, [whispers] “I read fanfiction,” and she was like, [whispers] “me too,” and we had to share with the group and one person brought it up and then we were like, “us too,” and it just felt like we were all standing up together and just – “all these people in real life!”

4. They actually do exist in physical reality!

7. That day in class, I was so happy! The year before I came here, I was in a foreign country with very few real friends and nobody there was into fandom, and I was really lonely and kind of miserable, because I was like, “I just really miss having people I can talk to about my television.”

3. But even then it’s still kind of like this level of, like, I don’t know – just because you’re in fandom, I don’t know what kind of fandom you like, do we have a ship war we don’t know about? Part of me wants to be like, do you guys have Livejournals, a Tumblr account? But on the other hand, maybe they don’t want to look at my Tumblr.
1. I want to look at your Tumblr.

3. Are you sure?

1. Yeah.

3. We should do full disclosure, “these are the fandoms you’re gonna see on my Tumblr, if you want it you can have it.” It’s still guarded in a way, which is strange, even in a super safe space, but on the internet I can be like “la la la these are all my secrets!”

7. I feel like there’s less of an investment on the internet. If someone doesn’t like your Tumblr, okay, I’m just not going to follow your Tumblr. In real life, is this going to be awkward now, that I haven’t followed your Tumblr?

5. Can I go off of that for just a second? In real life I’m not telling anyone my penname. I’ve never told anyone my penname in fanfiction because I’m not going to make you guys look me up. You’re either going to find me or not. And you won’t know it’s me, or maybe you would, because I’m pretty much myself in my fanfiction, you read it and you’re like, “holy shit,” that kind of thing, but I don’t ever disclose my penname. Just because it’s like, “no, this is my space right here to be the most creative I can be and freest I can be,” and that to me – while I would love to have my friends look at my stuff and tell me what they think, I don’t really want them to. You’re kind of right, you’re still kind of guarded in real like.

3. But I always get really excited when somebody finds it.

5. I know! It’s like, “yesss, they’re talking about me.”

7. One time my brother commented on one of my fics and I was like, JESUS CHRIST TAKE THE WHEEL. [laughter] No!

6. Did he know it was you?

7. It was on Livejournal, and we had a gentleman’s agreement that he would ignore anything that was about fandom, and I was like, “get away, get away, Jesus Christ!”

5. A friend of mine in undergrad actually found out by looking over my shoulder. I have never forgiven him for this, but at the same time, he also writes some of his own stuff and he gave me his penname in apology, and I was like, “I don’t want you reading mine when you know it’s me!” But at the same time, he leaves me little nice reviews, “good job.” But he’s such a fanboy, it’s hilarious. But we became really good friends because of it. So if he hadn’t found it we might not be as good friends, but at the same time I was still really squeamish when he saw that, like, “oh my god, no.”

7. Can I piggyback off that and ask a follow-up question? Have you had friendships with people in fandom that you think were influential in your life, or any kind of mentorship relationship? I don’t know, when I first came into fandom it was because my real life friends were into it so we all kind of got in there together, but once I was in fandom I also met other people that – their friendship has changed my life, that’s really dorky to say, but I made different decisions in my life.

1. I’m a champion lurker.

6. Me too.
1. And usually if I message someone it’s a PM and it’s because I feel like I should say, “I stalk your journal but you said this and I found it really interesting and I wanted to comment,” and I always start with apologizing that I’m a lurker and whatever. But no, I’m a champion, champion lurker.

6. I’m the same way. I have people in real life that I’ve met because we were interested in the same books and so on. I fell in love over a book, that’s very typical of me. But I can’t think of anyone online that I had that kind of connection to.

3. I guess because I made a lot of my Livejournal friends back in the Harry Potter heyday, I was penpals with a couple people, but I don’t even remember their urls or why I knew them or anything about them now that I used to exchange letters with. There’s one person that I’ve been internet friends with that we graduated to we would leave each other voicemails. We would call, we wouldn’t answer the phone because we were too nervous but we would listen to each other’s voicemails and now we talk basically every day since like 2003. And I’m actually meeting her for the first time on Sunday, I’m so excited. We keep almost meeting and then it doesn’t happen, we get nervous. She’s at this point one of my best friends, we know everything about each other. And then I have some other – it kind of depends on the platform. Livejournal it was really easy to make friends with, Tumblr I’ve found kind of hard to make friends with but I’ve still kind of done it. I did end up meeting randomly a person that I’m Tumblr friends with when I was traveling because I was like, I’m going to this place, anyone know anything about it, and this person took me and my brothers around and it was hilarious because we went into a sex shop and my brothers were like “what’s happening?” they’re adults, [but] younger than me. That was I guess the only internet person that I’ve met. I’ve done the opposite, I’ll go to a con and make friends and then become internet friends with them and get to be better friends through that, because I know them for a weekend and then I can communicate with them more online later. But my internet BFF, I’ll have more to say on Saturday.

6. I’m kind of curious, people who make friends in fandom, do you also carry it over to Facebook and things like that or no, is it very separate. I was just wondering.

7. If I’ve met someone in real life I’m okay with friending them on Facebook, but letting someone know my full name is kind of… I’m still really leery about that.

3. Yeah.

1. I meet people at book signings for authors and it’s nice to have a connection, and I’m more likely to friend them on Goodreads but I’m pretty locked down about my Facebook. That’s a part of my life, pictures. Goodreads you can message me or share books or we can be friends in the way we found a connection but we don’t really know each other. There’s different levels of letting you see in my life.

5. I have a different – I have about three emails, one for fanfiction, one for personal use, usually friends and whatnot, and third for business. That’s how it works. I keep three emails, that’s exactly what I do. My fanfiction one is fanfiction only and that one’s used for anyone who messaged me through that, or sometimes I give that one out for cons. That’s about it. But no, Facebook stays separate. You’re right, it’s more private I think.

7. I’ve got a separate fandom and real life email too.
2. I used to have all kinds of online friends, I think most of my friends were online for at least five years. But I don’t really stay in touch with them anymore. It was just back in the day there were always lots of people in chatrooms. I don’t know that that’s so much true anymore. I’m sure there are to some extent but slowly people started – there was definitely an attrition, eventually to the point where there would be like two people in the main Beatles chatroom that I would go to and both of them were AFK, away from the keyboard. So there’s some people that I met, even through those people who weren’t really part of fandom, that I still keep in touch with but it was kind of random.

7. I wonder if Twitter killed chatrooms.

5. If it did, I want to kill Twitter. I kind of liked the chatrooms.

3. I think chatrooms still exist, but that’s totally more peripheral.

5. I kind of miss the chatrooms, just because you had – oh god, the anons. How many of us missed the anons? [thumbs down] I wanted to reach in and just go, stop clogging my chatroom, I want to talk to the people I want to talk to and you guys are messing it up, stop it! I kind of miss chatrooms a little bit, because chatting with someone from Romania or something like that would be so cool, and how else are you even going to meet them – except in like Twitter or stuff like that, and then they’re all tagging me. I hate tags. I can’t stand them because I don’t understand them.

7. Do you like cataloging?

5. No.

[laughter]

1. And I love my cataloging class because it’s spending lots of quality time on Tumblr.

3. I get mad at Tumblr, though, because their tagging system – they just need to hire one of us to fix their tagging system.

1, 5, 6, & 7. YES

5. Maybe that would make it better.

7. Their tagging system is total balls.

3. The day I learned that they only catalog the first five I was just like, “I’ve been living a lie.”

5. I think it’s the idea of putting full sentences in a tag, I just can’t get over this.

7. There’s a thesis for somebody in why the hell people do that.

5. Why!

3. I think people do that because they’re too embarrassed to say – if it gets reblogged, they don’t want that comment to be attached to them, but it’s like a PS to people, “I’ll just put this in the tags.”

7. I know, but…

3. I’ll do that every once in a while, but never in the first five.

7. Yeah, catalogers have opinions about Tumblr tags.
3. Namely, fuck that.

[laughter]

2. I can’t get into it so much because I’m very much used to the chaotic internet. There’s just no structure, you’re going to meet the most random people, most people will be speaking Thai, it’s all good.

5. That’s really cool.

2. I’m very old-school, and I’m like, Twitter? What are you guys doing? 140 characters?

4. I know I have a Twitter account somewhere, but I never actually use it.

2. Even Tumblr I’m like, why are you watching four gifs at the same time?

3. It’s a sequence!

1. I have a Twitter, but I use it very much like my Livejournal. I just stalk people. I just stalk you to see what you’re doing, if you have random signings somewhere that’s close to me, if you said something interesting, if you’re giving out a book snippet. That’s what it exists for. It doesn’t really exist for communicating.

5. It’s the lurker’s paradise! I understand now, because I’m really not that much of a lurker.

7. I mean, I have it mainly because my fandom is all on Twitter, so… there’s not a website you can go to, it’s just Twitter.

5. Makes sense.

7. I feel like the only time I’ve done chatrooms it’s IRC backchannels for Yuletide. I don’t know. It’s a totally different experience.

2. IRC’s awesome.

7. I feel like you need a certain critical mass for it to work.

2. That’s true, and a big reason why I stopped going on Beatles chats and things is it was kind of a trend in the late ‘90s, the ‘60s revival thing, and then it wasn’t as popular. I think there are certain fandoms that go away after a time and it’s kind of sad. Maybe that’s one reason I’ve never really gone back, because all the Beatles forums are gone.

5. Maybe there’ll be a revival again.

7. This is part of why I love the AO3, is because they’re backing it all up, so even if you come into it five years later you can still see.

6. All the dead links.

5. I hate it when they pull fics, though. It’s extremely sad. Some of my favorite authors have stopped and pulled their fics and I’m like, “no, don’t pull it!”

6. Have you ever had someone who’s thinking, “oh, I’m going to start trying actually write original things, I’m going to publish things, so I’m going to clean out my account…”

5. Noooooo.
1. Those authors, the ones that wrote fanfiction, are really interesting, to listen to their FAQs and on Tumblr because they talk about other people doing fanthings of their own work, and they’re so much more tolerant of that than some of the older writers.

7. Except what’s her face, the woman who wrote *Fifty Shades of Grey*, she doesn’t want any fanfiction.

1. Oh, that’s startling.

6. But her book was *Twilight* fanfiction!

7. Exactly!

1. Someone wrote fanfic of *Fifty Shades*, a three book masterpiece, and they’re publishing it. I swear to God, someone wrote *Fifty Shades* fanfiction in three whatever novels…

5. This seems like a trend suddenly. Someone writes something, and then someone writes a fanfiction which is supposedly better and they publish it and then they’re like, “we’re going to write fanfiction of the fanfiction and we’re just going to publish that, too” and it’s gonna go on forever.

6. Is anyone else ever disappointed in the authors that actually get published? I feel like I’ve read so much better fanfic than the stuff that’s getting published.

1. That *Fifty Shades* got published – I’m just like, “buddy, you couldn’t give that money to somebody else? Really?”

5. I wish – I could actually name off the top of my head at least ten authors that I would love to see get their money’s worth, because they have written such good stuff. But whatever.

1. But that phenomenon is really interesting to me, the authors that really celebrate and embrace that kind of involvement from their fans and then the authors who are like, “fuck you, you’re not fans, I don’t want to see it, I don’t want to hear it, I’m gonna sue you.”

5. Isn’t that George R R Martin who really dislikes fan stuff?

7. There are a bunch. Anne Rice hates it.

5. Laurell K Hamilton asks [fans not to write] fanfiction of her stuff.

4. I would think that they would see it as flattery.

5. I think of it as that.

6. There was that [Mercedes] Lackey scandal – she was originally going to write this book, but then it was too similar to a fanfic that was already written, so actually she had to pull it all – I’m pretty sure that happened, right?

7. That might be Andre Norton.

6. Maybe, I might be mixing up authors.

6. It was never actually published, I think, so there was no actual suit, but she dropped the book because of the whole fanfic. So after that she didn’t like fanfic as much.

4. I remember wishing the Buffy writers would read some fic.

[laughter]

5. No kidding! I can honestly say that if some of these writers had come up to some of us that actually write fanfiction I would be like, “take it, make it real, please!” And I would be okay with that. I wouldn’t see a red cent and I wouldn’t care, just make it real.

1. No, I want the red cent.

[laughter]

4. I would want at least the credit.

3. It’s been interesting to see that happen recently, the writers seeing the fanfiction and either sort of sideways communicating with the fans that way or straight-up referencing — not necessarily taking fanfiction stories but things that become fanon and bringing that into it. I’m probably the only person that likes my main fandom here but that happens a lot; the writer looks at everything and he’ll make references to fanon stuff and he’ll even incorporate [it], he’ll go to authors and go, “hey, can I use your design for this for this character.” It’s really cool and interactive that he pays attention to all of that and I think it’s a weird new horizon of fandom.

1. It’s interesting to hear Julie Pleck, who does the Vampire Diaries — I don’t think she reads it specifically for that reason but she definitely encourages it. One of the actors of that show, Matt Davis, wrote this long epic totally wrong fanfiction piece and put it on Twitter to read, and he would harass her that he really wanted to get with Elena. His contract totally ran out on that show, just put that out there.

7. Did not happen, huh.

6. I think there are definitely positive experiences, but I think there’s also times when fandom feels very entitled to people listening to them and hearing their requests, and I think especially in fandoms like that the people up here hearing it are like, “oh, those are the crazy fans, the people who are interested in this,” which isn’t actually the case, it’s just crazier fans are usually the loud ones.

3. I feel that’s more so with TV, because there’s actual humans involved and then people get weird and creepy.

6. They feel like they can change things and people will listen because they’re right, they can change what’s going to happen.

7. Different media definitely have different stuff, although some of the harassment campaigns for authors, I think they’re horrible.

Question 4. Does you feel that you have acquired any skills from your participation in fandom?
4. I guess I learned vidding skills and that helped me later making book trailers, and I want to make more book trailers, actually. I’ve been meaning to make one for Good Omens for a long time.

1. That would be awesome.

7. Are you going to fancast Johnny Depp as Crowley?

4. I keep going back and forth. There’s a lot of artwork for Good Omens, so I think I might use that. If you use an actor people have their preconceived ideas about who that person is and what characters they’ve already played.

6. This isn’t really a skill, but that’s how I was introduced to Tumblr or even Livejournal. I didn’t really use the internet that much before and this is how I learned, “oh, Livejournal, this is what it is,” “ok, Tumblr, ok, I kind of get what you’re doing here.”

7. Someday you’ll need to know about social media.

6. Otherwise I wouldn’t have come across them.

3. Aside from reading, writing –

7. Those are good skills!

3. Also understanding tropes in stories. I feel like I’ve got a better concept of books, especially the concept of the Bechdel Test or the Woman in the [Refrigerator], I would have not as good a grasp on how feminism interacts – what makes a good book in a different way. This is a good story but this trope is kind of played out, or the difference between having an all-caps Strong Female Character on purpose or actually having a …

7. Do you think you get that from reading stories where it is or isn’t well done, or from meta…?

3. I would say from meta-analysis, where people take what happens in the canon and either rewrite it so it fits what their idea of a good relationship is, or just the analysis of the characters. When in a fandom people get really excited about the way a certain character was written because it breaks a trope or is a new way of looking at something. I get into a lot of discussion about that, so I’ve noticed that sort of thing more often.

7. Do you read a lot of meta? – Does everybody know what meta is? Like, critical discussion of things that have happened in fandom, whatever your source material is.

3. There’s a lot of that in my fandom, since it updates frequently. Before this I had lunch with a friend and we sat and re-analyzed what the new information meant for the characters and what kind of relationship they had and this and this. I had an hour-long discussion about that and then I was like, “shit, I’m late for my other talk about fandom!”

So that’s a really big part of that particular fandom, and I’ve really enjoyed that, analyzing the crap out of characters.

7. Critical thinking is a very important skill!

1. I think without fanfiction I wouldn’t know what a Mary Sue is.
5. Explain it for the audience, just in case.

1. A Mary Sue is a magical shining unicorn of womanhood who can do no wrong, ooooh! She’s the perfect being, she has the perfect illness and the perfect strength and the perfect vulnerability, oh God, Mary Sue.

5. Were you quoting something? Because that sounded really good.

1. No, just my own personal thing. Mary Sues.

5. That sounded really good.

1. I really hate the term feminist but I definitely look for YA fiction, for women’s fiction, for girls’ fiction to take a step beyond the Mary Sue, so when I read something new or I read something that someone’s recommended, I’m looking for Mary Sue, and if I can find Mary Sue, we have a problem.

6. I do think it’s interesting, though, how much we say “oh, this is a Mary Sue,” but we don’t call out the Gary Stus as much…


1. That gets me too. If I have the tall dark brooding boy – God help me, I’ve read so many tall dark brooding boys! Can I have a short fat friend, something else? And there was a book I was reading, Becca Fitzpatrick.

7. Hush?

1. *Hush Hush*, that’s the one. There’s a scene in there where the tall dark brooding boy and the girl are in the kitchen and he’s trying to decide internally whether or not he’s going to kill her, and she sort of gets that vibe that he’s got a kitchen knife and maybe he wants to kiss her but maybe he really wants to stick the kitchen knife in her gullet, and it’s a really interesting scene and she could have done more with it than she did, but whatever. But somebody took that scene and wrote a fanfiction response to it where he was an abusive boyfriend. Wow, okay. So your Gary Sue was a little different than my Gary Sue and that’s not really where I went with that, but – and I think when I get tired of the Gary Sue is when the Gary Sue lasts for three or four novels and doesn’t learn anything.

7. Ah, Edward…

1. See, I’m ok with Edward! Of all the Gary Sues to be okay with, Edward never bothers me.

7. Because he’s a 117-year-old virgin?

1. That might be it!

4. I threw Twilight across the room like four times while having to read it for class, because I just could not stand his character and Bella’s character. They were just too… I don’t know.

7. I do want to insert into this discussion, you know the original Mary Sues always died at the end of the story? That was part of the original definition, they would insert characters in Star Trek fiction and they would show up –
5. The red shirts?

7. No, no, she would show up and solve whatever mystery and everybody would fall in love with her and at the end of the story she would die because there was no way for the story to continue if she was there solving all the problems. So I find it really interesting that that’s…

5. That’s interesting.

1. She’s the James Bond femme fatale, he finally marries a girl and what do you know in a couple of minutes she’s dead in a car crash because James Bond can’t have a perfect lady. He’s never gonna screw Moneypenny because that’s not how that relationship works. And I think that’s hearkened back to women’s fiction, Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women, A Wide Wide World*, the lady of the house cannot live and she doesn’t start living until you hit Pollyanna and her Glad Game kind of bullshit.

6. You kill off the women first. Those are the two things that usually die. The mother sometimes, or small children, usually a girl.

3. The woman in the fridge.

5. Well, thank you for explaining that.

1. I think that anybody going into a library position where you have to recommend things, you have to be able to see things to recommend and see things to maybe distance a reader from. Say that my patron is me. I know that I don’t want Mary Sues. So I’m not going to give my patron a Mary Sue. Whereas if my patron liked Mary Sues, I would have to know enough about them to go find them. There are some women that love *Little Women*. I don’t know why, I think it’s a terrible novel. But I have to know enough about it to give it to you, or at least be able to track it down.

3. Or be able to have a conversation with that person, especially thinking about a teenager or younger, why this trope is – have a conversation with them later about why.

1. Why we killed Buffy in season five. If you don’t know why we did that –

3. Being able to understand the trope and explain it to them.

6. How many times did she die?

7. So reading widely in order to…?

1. I don’t know that you have to read widely, I think you just have to read well. And I say that because I work on a reference desk and I answer all sorts of questions for people who think I know – I don’t know anything about science, I know jackshit about the textile industry, but I have to be able to look at what you’re telling me and look at research and be able to give you some kind of…

5. Answer.

1. Answer. And you think that I – I don’t know anything about this! Nothing! I don’t know when the Civil War was, whatever, I’ll look it up on Google, that’s what Google is for.

5. Going off also the critical skills of knowing tropes, I think by being part of a fandom or knowing of fandoms or just vaguely being able to answer questions, you’re
communicating. I think communication on one of the most basic levels is a fandom must. Whether you’re lurking or you’re writing or you’re drawing or you’re making music videos or something, I think what you’re doing is you’re communicating. I honestly don’t think there’s ever such a thing as a one-way communication when it comes to fandom. I really don’t think so because the one who’s communicating to you first is the one you’re communicating back to. So if you take Buffy for example, Buffy died and I threw something at my TV, why? that’s my communication to them because they communicated to me first. I honestly don’t think there’s ever such a thing as a one way. You can’t be part of fandom in a one-way communication system.

3. Without having a reaction to what you’re seeing?

5. Exactly.

4. Even though they don’t actually hear what you’re saying, it doesn’t matter because you’re expressing yourself still.

5. I think fandom will take that even a step further, because now we have other people who might not be the first ones to initiate it, like Joss Whedon, he’s the one that brought this into our world, our lives, and I can’t call him up and call him an asshole at certain points and I can’t call him up and tell him I want to have his babies, but there’s a certain point where I found other people I can talk to and squeal about certain things and start tearing into other things, just because that first piece of initial communication worked. I think that helps me out especially since I want to be a youth librarian I like children but I want to be preteen to older teens, those are the people I like the most, those are the ones I love talking to and having talk to me a lot, and that to me is the most important part of my fandoms. I can talk to them, and while I may not be part of their fandoms and I might not be able to talk about certain things because I have never experienced some of this, that doesn’t matter because we will find something to speak of.

7. I want to follow up on that a little – what do you think is the effect on you, the difference between your responding to a television that’s not going to answer to you versus being able to respond to people who then respond back?

5. I think part of it is a review session. Reviewing someone’s work. I’m not going to go in and trash them. That’s not my personality. I will never do that. It’s not helpful. And I don’t think librarians can come up to someone and say, “you’re reading trash,” to the little old lady who’s reading a Virginia Henley bodice ripper.

7. Power to her!

5. Power to her is right. And side note, if you actually go to a nursing home, the books they most want are romances. And not just the Christian ones, they want bodice rippers. But I think it’s like for me it’s allowed me to become more eloquent with my communication. I still blurt things out, it’s a disease, I know this, but there’s the idea of I will take my time and actually think about it and then in a review I will be like, “OK, here’s what I saw that was great, here’s what I saw that wasn’t so great: work on it.” And I’m OK being like that. And then when I come to the person in a library setting – teenagers, you know what, they either care what you have to say or they don’t care at all, in my opinion. So when it comes to my communication with them it’s always like, “try that book right now, try that book,” and they’re like, “whatever, OK,” and they’ll either
try it or they won’t. Now when they’re done with it I’ll be like, “what did you think,” very short, “what did you think?” and they’ll be like, “it’s cool,” and I’ll say, “didn’t you like that one part,” and they’ll start right away and suddenly we’re having a conversation and it works for me with the age group I want the most because I’m excited, why can’t they be? It’s very selfish.

4. No, excitement is contagious!

5. It is, sometimes. Sometimes you come across that very shy young man who just can’t look you in the eye because you’re older and prettier [laughter] – no. And you’re real. And he’s like – it’s so cute, it’s adorable. OK, I’m done.

3. Well, also, in the way that you were talking about communicating with them, I would also be able to identify the problems that perhaps we had as young people. I’m still thinking specifically about youth librarianship, sorry. But since I can go back and be like, “those are the issues I had when I was that age, these are the warning signs that I was probably exhibiting but nobody was picking up on that I was only able to have the outlet of fandom.” I could probably notice better in those young people. I mean, you know you don’t want to go up and be like, “so, depressed?” You can think of the books that would be helpful in some kind of way and suggest them and if it doesn’t work it doesn’t work. There’s definitely a line between, “hey, this is a cool thing,” and, “hey, you know where they write some really good NC-17 stuff is this website…”

[laughter]

3. But you can kind of guide towards things subtly if you see it and need that outlet.

4. And yeah, I think as far as teenagers who might be depressed and not have that outlet, you don’t need to say, “I see you’re depressed,” you just need to take an interest. Because if someone takes an interest in you and you feel seen and validated, and if they have the same interests as you that’s great because you have something to talk about, so I think all those things are really helpful and useful.

5. Maybe adults feel that way too.

1. I think to go back to the original part of the question, though, what skills it gave us – I learned to navigate. I’m not a tech guru, obviously, by the questions I sometimes ask. And god knows how long it was while I was hearing, “OTP OTP OTP,” before I got up the courage to ask, “what the fuck is an OTP?”

[laughter]

1. And I’d been in fandom for quite some time before that phrase and those letters all came together. But I learned to navigate, I learned how to go into somebody’s memories and find what was interesting to me, you learned different appreciation skills. I won’t say that I really learned coding because if I code something it’s usually on accident – great, it happens, exciting! But I think that learning your way around – I think the internet was the first place I ever saw a consent thing where I had to sign my “yes I am spuriously seventeen.”

[laughter]

7. Totally seventeen! Totally!
1. Don’t tell my mom that I turned seventeen yet! You know, I think that it for me was very much about – I’m sure that parents have some idea that fandom exists but my mom didn’t know that I read fanfiction until one day she was like, “what are you reading,” and I was like, “oh, it’s this fan story.” You know, we kind of left it at that. But in terms of internet browsing it was one of the really different places that I learned to actively control my own internet browsing.

3. And how to cover your tracks.

5. That too.

1. That didn’t work so well. I still don’t delete my browser history often enough.

7. If anything happens to me someone’s going to have to throw my phone, my laptop, half my things…

3. My friend and I have that agreement with one another, “ok, if we die, the first thing you do is – well, first you save all these folders so you can have it, but then delete it so that my family doesn’t know the weird stuff.”

5. I need to enter into an agreement like that because I’ve got so much that hasn’t been written yet.

3. My fandom secret keeper.

1. It’s definitely where I learned about privacy for myself and my own limits. And I’ve gotten better and better with Facebook debacles and this that and the other thing, but everything is passcoded all to hell, and if you don’t want Disney movies, you’re screwed, you’re never getting in there no matter what you do, you’re never getting in there. As you get older and wiser and smarter and all that kind of junk the internet gets more complicated and more access and more usernames and more whatever. We all definitely get a little more savvy about how we use fandom, treat fandom, work within fandom.

2. I learned a lot.

5. Totes!

2. I guess there weren’t really search engines when I started fandom-ing

7. Does anyone remember Altavista?

2. I remember before you could type in a url. AOL had a homepage and there were twenty buttons and you got to choose that button and that was what you could do. That’s actually how I ended up with the X-Files, because that’s one of the buttons they had.

1. The first website I ever went to was the X-Files website.

2. My parents thought I was insane. Then after that search engines started being around, and you would get two hits for very common things because it was only searching the metatags in the header. So it’s been interesting to see how that’s evolved and now I have this elaborate theory about how people “should” find information on the internet so that’s kind of interesting. Also websites – people want them and I can, I used to be able, one thing it’s done is it’s made me terrible. I’m just now finally learning how to do CSS as well as I used to do HTML tables. It definitely does advantage, I don’t do that crap, I can just make this table 100% width and that’ll work on any of y’all’s devices. It’s been
interesting. It definitely taught me communication skills. I type like that now, which I’m sure all of you do too.


7. I didn’t even think about that but I definitely used to be hunt and peck before I had to write so much.

1. I remember when they put the box over the keyboard and you tried to type and that was a disaster, but within a couple of years the internet exploded and my usage of it went through the roof. My mother now’s the hunt and peck—I’m like, “Mom, what the fuck are you doing.”

5. My dad still does that.

4. Mine does too. And they did the thing with the box and your hands and I remember when I could type ten words per minute: “ooh that’s so exciting! I can do ten words!” I can do a lot more than that now.

1. My test for that is always to put a book next to me and try to just look at the book and type and it’s sometimes a nightmare, especially if you lose your place in the book.

7. Or if you’re one key off.

1. Thank god for spellcheck that picks up all the crap you put out when you do that.

6. I love spellcheck so much.

5. I enjoy spellcheck. The only problem is I’m such an anal-retentive writer that I will go through because my “for” and “froms” and “fours” and everything else just starts mixing. I have never ever had the misspellings of there, their, they’re, I know that stuff.

1. Oh no.

5. I know that stuff.

4. I would definitely never trust spellcheck to catch – I definitely always go through and read for basic grammar and spelling mistakes.

5. It’s been ingrained in me but my keyboarding class actually took place in middle school and we didn’t have boxes, we had paper over. Our screens were the green blinkers, the black screen green blinkers. I had 93 words per minute by the time we were done, because our teacher had cat glasses and the hair like she used to wear a beehive. She was freaky and crazy and awesome, just like Ms Nelson, and I learned shit. I can look at the book and type out absolutely everything and go back over it and I’ll find 10 errors but that’s about it. So glad I had that class. But you’re right, the internet certainly helps me out with stuff like OTP, the acronyms, AUs, I love AUs by the way – Alternate Universes just in case none of us know – I vaguely knew Mary Sue, I didn’t know enough until you guys told me. A lot of it is getting up the gumption to ask someone without them going, “you’re an idiot, you n00b.”

1. I definitely had my one fandom friend and it was our secret that we were both in fandom. [And I’d ask her] “what’s OTP mean?” And then we figured out what OT3 was, and I was like, “oh, that makes a lot more sense now. I understand.”
5. That’s just it, too, I think fandoms allow you to accumulate things like how to work a tag, I still haven’t done that, what all the acronyms mean, how do we speak, it’s not just leetspeak, I’m not talking about that, I’m talking about how do you talk to someone. We create new words, we create new meaning.

3. And the language evolves, too. OTP now means something like – I remember when I first talked about OTP it was like, there can only be one. And now I have a list of top ten OTPs and –

7. The Harry Potter ship wars, right, that was the original.

1. You can get somebody’s Yuletide list and be like, “these are my OTPs of my top ten fandoms.”

5. And you’re like, “oh, well, I like that one, so let’s go with that one.”

6. You know what else I love just watching? A new character arrives, so of course you have all the ship names slowly – trying to figure out which one’s going to stick. So you have all the ones going out and you see which one actually ends up being – that confuses me to watch the whole process.

7. I know, but I feel like since the Archive of Our Own started I don’t have to worry quite so much about “how do I search, I don’t know what term to use.” But on Tumblr, when I get into a new fandom, I’m like, “what is the search term, what the hell?”

5. You’re right, it evolves, and that helps us become adaptive in the real world. Real life, excuse me. It helps us become adaptive. I think that’s a definite strength for what becoming part of fandom does.

1. I think it’s really interesting to me to see the parallel between the way we did, or the media did, it in real life with Bennifer and Brangelina and all that stuff, and we do it in fandom. I watch Once Upon a Time – I don’t read a lot of fanfiction because I’m not a Swan Queen shipper! I object! But anyway, the parallel between naming celebrity couples and the way that we name internet couples, I like the way we name internet couples more, it’s more interesting. It’s interesting and I would be interested which came first, if some journalist tagged on to “these weird internet people have been doing this, maybe we could do this and sell more shit.”

7. I wonder when they started doing that.

2. I think it’s been around for a long time. People used to call our friends who were couples by… I heard my parents call people that when I was a kid.

5. That makes sense. You know, couples, you just smash everything together and it’s both of them at one time.

6. This is kind of not related to the actual question, but what do people think about – because I feel like you can’t really find genfic anywhere in most fandoms. It’s usually all about the shipping.

7. Well I think it depends on where you’re going, right? Because Sugar Quill I think had a fair amount of gen.

3. I don’t care, I only care about shipping so I wouldn’t know.
7. When I got back into *Hobbit* fandom and I was like, “OK, this book has been around for forever; there must be old fic, right?” and one of my friends was like, “you should check out this website,” and I was like, “OK,” and then I go and I’m like, “where’s the shipping, why is it all gen? what the hell?”

1. AO3 definitely tags genfic – I can’t say that I read it, because if I’m going through fanfiction I’m probably looking for a particular ship, but they definitely tag it.

3. AO3, definitely.

7. Although we’re getting at why do so many people care more about relationships…

6. Yeah, I was kind of wondering about both, because I feel like everyone is —

1. Oh, because we’re all trying to get laid.

5. She’s kind of right, right?

3. Or we just want to read the porn.

5. Vicariously, yeah.

6. I like genfic, usually.

7. I do too.

3. I like character study.

5. Actually, character studies, fanfiction[.net] does it too, all you have to do is go through the character filter. Sometimes what happens is it ends up being a ship, but at the same time, sometimes you will find the ones that are the character studies or something like the inner thoughts of the characters, those are amazing. Some of them are so well done because you’re like, “wow, did the author actually do this?” You know, that type of thing. But I’m kind of with [1], everyone just wants the –

1. By and large, I’m telling you that we’re all looking for sex. There’s not enough sex in our lives. I mean, men have porn, that’s why men surf porn websites. We’re women, we don’t surf as much porn websites.

3. That’s what always makes me laugh, when you hear not-fandom people say women don’t care about porn, or they’re like, “guys like when two girls get together but girls don’t ever like when two guys get together – “

7. That’s a lie.

3. That’s my whole life.

7. But the idea that love stories are the most important part of our literature or whatever, or why are romance novels such a huge industry, or… the idea that a love story can drive things in a way that a character study can’t, or just, I don’t know. I enjoy genfic but if you’ve got a 500,000 word plot fic… I don’t want this.

3. And there’s not a point where they finally make out and you’re just like the heavens open up and shine down on your naked OTP –

[laughter]

3. That’s what I’m waiting for. That’s the moment.
1. And really I don’t want what’s in the romance – if I wanted a goddamn bodice ripper I’d get a bodice ripper, if I wanted corsets and strings and guns and –

7. See, I enjoy those things, but I also enjoy Regency AUs.

1. I’d go get one from a bookstore or the library. I want fanfiction where it’s often dirty and nasty and wrong.

3. Yeah.

1. And nobody has to look at me while I read it!

5. Here’s the thing, though, thinking critically, our lives are centered around relationships. The most dynamic of relationships, and usually the ones that create conflict, climax, “wink wink” – the ones that create the most turmoil and then come to the sweetest conclusion, or the most raunchy or tragic, tends to be love, or lust, or something along the lines of BDSM. I like all of it, it’s so good. But at the same time I think genfics ask for more – I really do think it asks a bit more from you on a critical point of view. Who are you looking at, what are you looking at, it’s not just plot plot plot plot plot, it’s also who’s thinking what, analyzing in some way, shape or form what’s going on and it’s just kind of – I don’t read a lot of gen so I can’t say too much about it anymore, but there’s something different about it, because it’s not necessarily just their relationship, it’s also something else.

7. So both of you, do you think friendship fic is –

6. I love friendship fic.

7. See, I love friendship fic, but that is also about a relationship. Does it have to have the sex in it? I don’t know. In order to have the –

5. I don’t think it has to have the sex in it to be a relationship.

7. Yeah, exactly.

1. I think there’s friendship fic for my OTP and I’m like, “fuck this, where’s the sex?”

7. Fair enough!

1. I’m into friendship fic between two characters that I like and I want to be friends. I’m like, “aww, you’re friends, that’s good, I like this!”

5. Here’s the thing, I like Hermione and Draco as friends because she belts him one. I don’t want them having sex, I never want to see them having sex, that dude is sexless as far as I’m concerned.

7. You are –

3. You are in the minority.

5. I know I’m in the minority. I love the friendship ones because that just makes me feel – that is amazing, I want a friendship like that. That’d be great. I don’t really need them having sex.

1. But you only want your friend people having friendship fic. You don’t want your OTP having –
5. Your OTP, yeah, that’s different.
6. I don’t know if I have OTPs.
5. You must be again in the minority.
3. I’m multiship. I can see different things with different people, but I still –
6. I’ll read a ship if I’m interested in one of the characters, and I don’t hate the other character, but it’s always – I feel like I don’t need a romance, I’d probably prefer a friendship. Though I can go either way I guess.
1. I think I saw, it was probably a crossover fic, in my Battlestar Galactica days, where maybe it was a Children of Dune or something like that but it was definitely a crossover fic, and I was like, “oh, no one’s getting screwed but this is still a nice fic, awesome!”
7. It takes all kinds, right.
1. Sad but true.
6. Back to skills, I’m not sure if this is really a skill, but I think fandom has allowed me to be more honest about what I’m enthusiastic about, and more honest about what I really don’t like, while at the same time increasing my tolerance for things I don’t like. Like Twilight, because I used to make a really awful Twilight face whenever it was mentioned and I think I’m getting better at that, hopefully. So I think that’s useful [for] trying to help people find things they like even if I don’t necessarily like what they like.
7. That’s definitely true. Being open about your passions.
5. And not so judgmental of others.
7. There’s no kinkshaming!
5. No kinkshaming. I think that’s the idea of – you’re very right, there’s tolerance that builds up because you’re into fandom. Come on, shipping wars, I never get into them because –
6. They’re hilarious to watch!
5. They’re hilarious to watch, but after a certain point it becomes: “no, you’re wrong!” “no, you’re wrong!” “no, you’re wrong!”
7. God.
5. Draco/Harry, and I’m like, NO! I’m sorry, that’s not me. But there’s something to be said about being able to be – “oh, we’re just having fun.”
4. Yeah, if you can remember that that’s the whole point, this is for fun and not to get into stupid ship wars.
1. I think that’s largely when I walk away from a fandom, is when something becomes distasteful or something becomes not fun. And there have been entire communities that I just really – and I don’t know how old you are I don’t know what you do, I don’t know where you live, I don’t really care, but this is ridiculous. And I just walk away. Because it’s not fun.
6. Can we have an example? Not specific, necessarily, just…
1. Um, I have a tendency to read specific authors. You get into a fandom, you find the good fic.

6. Yeah, and you kind of stick with them.

1. And these particular authors were being hassled by the moderator of the community and they were explaining why they were no longer posting in the community. They were providing screenshots of what had gone down in the comments section, and the moderator simply disagreed with something that one of them had said and when they tried to defend one another by saying, “you know, this is not a pairing-specific community, we wouldn’t post if it was a specific pairing community” – they tried to be...

5. Diplomatic?

1. Yeah, and they weren’t getting anywhere, and then they were slightly less diplomatic and didn’t get anywhere there either. And I was like, “you know, I don’t really care who posts here anymore but I’m not going to visit this site. I’m not going to deal with this moderator, you need to behave this way, it’s distasteful to me and this is not fun. This is my kick-back time, this is time that I should be doing homework, I’m not going to hang out here.”

7. Yeah, dealing with toxic personalities is definitely a part of communicating. Like, “OK, we’re done.”

4. Walk away.

1. I think that’s good practice for real life and then specifically for working in library and information sciences because people are asking our opinions, they’re trusting us to have good opinions, they’re trusting us to have neutral opinions.

5. Or as neutral as possible.

1. As neutral as possible.

4. Is that an oxymoron?

3. Informed but unbiased statements.

2. Nonjudgmental

1. And I happen to love *Twilight* but I know it’s the bane of many people, so I had to practice to not be offended when people said they didn’t like *Twilight*. I had to practice to let it go. It’s a goddamn book. It’s fiction, it’s a book.

4. It doesn’t affect your real life. You don’t let it affect you, it doesn’t have to.

6. I actually love debating with people who don’t like things I do, and I want to know why. Sometimes they have good points.

1. I started writing readers’ advisories for books I didn’t like, because I felt if I could write a justifiable readers’ advisory where I could tell you, “this might be the book for you,” and I hated it, then I felt that I had done my job.

5. Instead of just slamming it.

1. It started with picking books, I’d go to the library, I’d pick a title or a cover I think is interesting, I think the jacket might be okay, and I read it. And whether or not I like it I
write a reader’s advisory for it where I am as unbiased as possible, where I say, “this is
the book for these fans,” or “this is the book with this whatever,” and usually if I have
anything caustic to say I try to navigate it to something about a recurring character, a
recurring theme, the sequel will be following shortly, or something to suggest we’ve seen
this novel before without saying, “wow, that’s two hours of my life I’m not getting back.”

5. There is something to be said for being slightly caustic about a few things.

1. I’m willing to do that with readers I know, readers I care about. I’m not willing to do
that with the reader that’s – how do I know if you’ve ever been here before, how do I
know if you’re shy, how do I know if I’m going to chase you off? I want you to use
whatever services I’m providing, be they informational, technological, book-based
knowledge. Whatever it is, I want you to always come and use them and feel free to use
them and feel safe to use them, and that safety becomes paramount if I’m inflicting my
opinion on you. I do have an opinion and it’s usually loud and proud –

5. I would love to take a class with you on that because I can honestly say I’m very
optimistic about many things that I read, but there’s a certain point where I can’t say
anything good about something that I’ve read.

1. I can even talk about Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women* with great things to say when
I have to, and usually when I have to I always tag along on the end with, “and she wrote
other novels too!”

5. I liked *Jo’s Boys*.

6. What’s your favorite of hers?

1. It was *A Long Fatal Love Chase*, which is all kinds of wrong. … There is a reason that I
will not ever work in the youth section, where I have to get paid providing my opinion to
youth where I can say, “could you read John Green’s cancer novel and not hers ‘cause
that one sucks.”

5. I’ve got to say I haven’t learned that particular skill. I’m very frank in some of my
opinions. But in return I expect absolute frankness from people that have read something
and I want their opinion on it. It can be very personal and extremely caustic, especially if
someone says, “*Redwall* is the only good book out of that entire series because he’s just
repeating himself over and over,” I’m like, “I love the entire Brian Jacques series, I don’t
care what you say.”

7. Yeah, you’ve got to tone it down.

6. Dial it back a little bit.

5. It’s the idea of – you can say it nicely but I don’t ever feel like I should completely
have something nice to say at all times.

6. I think the most important thing is qualifying your opinions. You don’t just – I would
not normally say “I just hate *Twilight*,” I’d say “I don’t like *Twilight* because I think the
relationship is really unhealthy because it disturbs me.” Which at least is qualifying
things so it’s not so much just saying, “oh, this is bad because.” At least you explain.

3. I would still only do that to somebody I knew well. I wouldn’t want a new person to
come into the library and the one thing they pick up I say, “no, that’s crap.”
6. Yeah, you definitely could say, “it’s good if you like these things. If you don’t like these things – if you really like historical accuracy this book is probably not for you,” things like that.

1. I’ve had instances where – I’m not much on Christian anything, but I give a lot of children’s book recommendations, or picture books, I read a lot of picture books. And I give recommendations to people who are going to parties or this, that and the other thing, and somebody wanted a recommendation for a book to get for a baby shower or something. And I asked about the parents and they’re Catholic, they’re totally into the Bible-thumping picture books, and so *The Littlest Angel* – I hate that story, I think it’s stupid – I was like, “this is a good book.” And I didn’t share my “I hate the fucking *Littlest Angel*, I never want that shit,” and the parents were very pleased with it, they cooed over it, they enjoyed it. That’s great, I’m very glad I could help.

5. Maybe it’s the audience, too, that you’re talking to. I think you guys are hitting on that.

[general agreement]

1. I’m happy to put my opinion somewhere where only the people I care about will see it.

5. Like the blog, right?

1. No, I probably wouldn’t even put my genuine feelings on a blog, because what if that author got a hold of my opinion and I really said something –

6. They have pretty thick skins, they have to.

7. Some of them don’t. Have you seen any of the Amazon comment wars or the people who respond to bad Goodreads reviews, oh my God, stop it, stop it, stop it.

1. And that’s one reason why my Goodreads reviews are as general as I can get them. Because if this author goes through and looks at them and I’m ever at a signing where they are, I want to be able to look them in the face and have not said something completely and utterly trashy about their work.

4. I would not care if Stephenie Meyer –

1. She’s really funny in person, she’s very personable, and she knows how to deal with those weird freaks in line that hand her essays about why Jacob Black needs to marry them.

6. Really?

5. Wow.

1. It takes talent to deal with that kid, because you don’t want to shut them down, you don’t want to call them a freak, even though they are.

5. But then again a lot of what we’ve been saying – anyone in a fandom is a freak….

1. I will say this about fandom. By and large, no matter what fandom I’m ever in, it has very much taught me to own what feels good to me, what reads right to me, and it taught me to explore. And I think that being in library and information science both are about what feels right, what needs to be explored and how we can help other people do those two different things.
4. I think that was a quotable comment.
5. And we’re all done, goodbye everyone!
7. Awesome. How are we going to follow up on that awesome quote?
5. I don’t know, that’s why I said we should all just leave.

**Question 5: Any other follow-up comments that we skipped or haven’t come to?**

3. I wanted to ask about how people – I guess this is a bigger deal with youth services, but I worry about the intersection of work life and fandom life, and what’s going to be okay. When I worked at my internship at a high school – there’s an in-joke in my fandom and I printed it out on an extra piece of laminate and stuck it on the front desk, just to wait and see if any of the teenagers in that fandom noticed it. And I came in to work one day and my coworkers were like, “look, look, somebody added something!” and then it became this collage.
5. That’s awesome!
3. And everybody was really secretive about it and then one day I wore a fandom shirt and somebody stopped me in the hall. And I want to talk about it, and I was talking about it one day, and this kid asked me, “what’s your OTP?” And I was like, “this could get unprofessional really quickly.” I want to be able to talk to them about it, but I don’t know where the line – especially when I’m still young-young and look younger than my age, “I’m significantly older than you and I’m reading this fanfiction about people that are your age and having sex. I don’t want to talk to you about that.” But I still really – I was dying to talk to him about it, but I had to make a point to stop myself before it became not cool.
5. I think that you’re right, that’s a very good intersection between real life and professional real life. There’s a difference between meeting someone on the street and stopping you, like, “God, a fandom t-shirt, what’s your OTP?” Same thing happens to me with my fandom t-shirts, “what’s your favorite character?” Oh yeah, I’ll talk to you about it. I’ll even talk to you about my favorite pairing in that world, on the street.
3. But it’s different because if you’re a young adult librarian, you can recommend a book in which characters have sex, and you can talk to them about that, but that’s different because it’s not like—
4. You’re not invested in it.
3. And I didn’t write that, I didn’t write that sex scene, but in fandom it’s like, I could have, and I probably did.
5. It was you!
3. It puts it on a more personal level, and I worry if I get a job I’m going to have to delete my Tumblr. Or at least take all the picture of me off it, or some way I’m going to have to separate my professional self from my fandom self. And that kind of sucks to me.
7. If I get a job I know I’m going to have to just lock my entire Livejournal, and it sucks. I hate it when people do that.
3. I know to a certain degree everyone has to do that, but especially if you’re working with children. They’re looking at the same – but you can’t.

5. Here’s the thing, too, though, sometimes I think of my fandom as kind of like my tattoo. I don’t have one, but if I did have a tattoo, it’s kind of like, as a librarian and a professional librarian, you have a certain image. You’re a community figure first of all, and sometimes a very important one. You can be on the council, especially in a small town. But the idea of the professional life versus the personal one, that will get lonely real quick if you don’t have some connection. Fandom’s one of the easiest ways I know how to make one. I think in some ways it’s okay to be in your fandom, but you’re right, when it comes to stuff like sex or pairings, how do you go about giving an opinion without being caustic about it sometimes. You’re right, it’s a tough thing.

4. I think the comparison of the tattoo is actually really useful. I do have a tattoo, and when I got it I was working so I had to put it in a place where I could hide it, but then when I want people to see it they can see it. So in my professional life it was hidden and that wasn’t part of who I was, but it’s there underneath.

7. And also in some workplaces you want to advertise that you’re the kind of person who has tattoos and gauges in your ears and your hair is dyed blue. It depends on the workplaces. There are some places where that makes you – if you’re a teen librarian that might make you a more credible figure that a teen would actually be willing to talk to, that you have that on display on your body. Like, “yeah, I’m not your mom.”

3. I made that conscious decision when I was getting a tattoo. I really wanted it to be visible, and I had the job at the library and I was planning on being a librarian. I was like, “I want this to be acceptable, so I’ll just do it and be one of those people who helps make it acceptable.” I think I would like fandom to be considered acceptable.

7. I think it will be more and more, because – this is my pet theory, right, that we’re the first generation that were baby fans and we grew up and so now the first generation of baby fans is becoming professional. And there’s just going to be more and more people in the workplace where, yeah, that’s a thing that we did when we were teenagers and maybe it’s a thing we still do.

3. And it’s up to us, really. We’re not the people who created fandom but we’re the first generation of super-widespread on the internet.

7. We had the internet.

3. I feel like it’s kind of on us to make it what it is.

4. Eventually we’ll be the people making the rules.

3. We’re setting the precedents here, so we could either make it a creepy thing that we hide, or we could make it a thing that, “yeah I’m in this fandom. I might not tell you my url but I will tell you that I’m in the fandom. If you want to talk about it we can talk about it.”

5. At lunch break or something.

3. Yeah. Not during –
7. Also, you can have a general fandom tattoo; you probably wouldn’t want to have a tattoo of people have sex. I think that that’s a reasonable distinction.

5. But you’re right, it’s gauges as well and stuff like that. Who looks at us and the appearance of us. I’m going to say this out loud, we’re all women here. Where are my guys?

4. I didn’t notice. [ironically]

5. I know for a fact there are guys out there.

6. Not as many in library science.

7. Not as many in fandom, either.

3. It depends on the fandom. The different fandoms I’ve been in had different [ratios].

5. Tattooed, gauges, dressing professionally, being a student ten years older than you or twenty years younger, I think for all that there may be some gaps in between appearances – to age, to sex, to whatever – I think sometimes fandoms allow us to bridge that gap.

And it’s not just communication, it can just be, “you know, you’re cool.” You have this idea of a connection beyond what you just look like and teenagers – I’m going to speak about teenagers because that’s what I know – for teens a lot of it is derived from appearance, but at the same time I think a lot of them just want to have something to talk about.

7. “On the internet nobody knows what you look like.” Do you think that’s part of it?

5. I don’t know, let’s talk about that.

7. You can’t judge appearance. You know what I mean? You can judge stuff like writing style.

3. You still have an online persona that you project, whether or not it’s physical.

5. On my online profiles, I don’t say I’m a girl, but right there, it says, reading, writing, girl, and it’s like, “bam.” It’s the idea of when you get out into the professional world, making that connection, it’s like, how does your appearance, if they find you, affect what they see in you, especially when you talk to them about certain fan stuff. I don’t know how to articulate this very well, I’m sorry.

3. A thing I thought of when you were talking about [how] online you don’t necessarily see what they look like, there are a lot of people that are in fandoms that I’m involved in now that are – I don’t know if it’s fandom in general or just the ones I’m in now attract a lot of people that are genderfluid in some way. And I think it’s important to a lot of these people that they can be the gender that they feel that they are online and not have to present that way. And I’ve met people, I knew that they were genderqueer, but if I met them in person first I would have said “she.” But knowing them online first, I can be like, “oh, when I meet them I use gender-neutral pronouns, and that’s no big deal because I’m used to talking to them that way.” And I think that’s important for people, to be able to present the self that they see in themself, and then later if you see a picture you’re like, oh, well, that’s a thing, I guess.” But if you want to be a man on the internet, be a man on the internet. You’re still a man in real life, too, but other people might not see you that way.
4. It’s a way of maybe practicing for real life, if you’re going to make a transition. “This is my identity.”

3. And if you get acceptance –

7. And not just gender, also definitely sexual orientation. You’re definitely right, it’s a good way to practice presenting as what you feel you really are. I don’t know, for me, no one on the internet knows what you look like [means] you can present different things – not just that I can present different things, but I can find different things in people that I wouldn’t have expected. For me, I grew up my entire life thinking I never want to have children, and then there are people on the internet that I’m friends with and they have children, and I’m like, “oh, I guess being a parent doesn’t mean you’re totally lame and have no time for anything I want to do. Actually maybe if everybody who has a child isn’t that different from me – “

4. It enables you to overcome your own preconceptions.

7. Yeah, your preconceptions about – a parent will be like this, or a person who’s a stockbroker will be like this, you find those things out about them second, and so you get a chance to form an impression of them.

4. Find the common ground first.

3. Like, if you saw them in real life you’d be like, “that person’s not going to care about the thing I care about. I’m not even going to bother talking to them.”

5. I’m going to be 68 and still writing this stuff.

7. Old lady fans are the best fans!

5. We’re the ones that are going to go, “you whippersnapper!”

7. “Get off my lawn!”

3. Yeah, the next generation are going to be like, “oh my God, my grandma would not shut up about dubcon last night – “

[laughter]

7. It’s going to be the best. We’re going to be the best, you guys.

2. We’re going to feel a lot less isolated, I think, when we get older, than other previous generations do, because we’re going to have all our ways to keep in touch with people online, and it’s not like we have to just sit in the nursing home by ourselves and be sad.

5. I’m going to try to avoid that forever.

3. I think with every year or day or whatever it gets easier and easier to do that, it becomes more and more natural. I lived with my roommate for years before I made a joke about fandom and she was like, “wait, what?” And we kind of stared at each other for a while, like, the next sentence no matter which way I stand on this is going to change our relationship – and that night we decided to room together again. And at that point we weren’t really friends, we were just roommates; we’d known each other for years, we just never talked about this in real life. And this is the friend that I had the meta conversation with before this, now we’re best friends. I had no idea. Little by little it becomes more and more natural – like you guys, I know some of you better than others but I’m sitting
here talking about some personal shit! It seems more natural because we’re all, if not in the exact same boat, in similar ones.

7. Fandom friends are the best.

4. I have a question. I’m curious, has writing, for those of you who write fanfic, has it ever led to you coming up with your own original characters and your original stories? Would that not have happened otherwise?

5. I think it still would have happened because I read books too, not just fandom stuff, so I think it would have happened. But by mixing up with fandom it allows me to flex my creative muscle, so to speak, because I’ll take an established character and do something different. So that allows me to check out other things.

7. Before I found fanfiction I wrote original fiction, and obviously it was shit because I was in like fifth grade. So I think I would still write, but I don’t – until I started writing fanfiction I never finished anything. So I think there’s kind of a trade-off for me, that I don’t have the personal motivation to just write something for me. Obviously it has to be for me or else I wouldn’t be interested in it, but I need it to be for other people to. So I think that I would still write, I think that no matter what I would want to be writing, but I don’t know that I would ever finish anything or show it to anybody and I think it would be really demoralizing in a way.

4. So it sets a precedent of a positive experience.

7. I feel so happy when I write something and I finish it and I post it and someone comments on it!

4. It’s like a hit of dopamine.

7. Just so happy! And part of why I just want to keep going back is I do have one or two people in most of my fandoms where I’m like, “I am writing this for you and I want you to like it, and I don’t really care what anybody else thinks about it.” But just anybody finding it and – it’s so validating! But I do think that I would read more books if I weren’t in fandom, and I think I would write more original stuff, but I don’t feel like that’s a negative thing. It’s just the way things worked out.

3. Also I have a hard time writing anything if I don’t have a deadline. Since I graduated college and didn’t have assignments, I write significantly less. And I had a resurgence getting into fandom in the last couple of years – I was big into it in high school and the first half of college, and I kind of stopped for a couple of years and then I got back into it.

2. Also this is why I don’t make personal websites anymore, because I just had so much fun doing it back in the day!

3. See, I thought I was done for forever and then I discovered something that made me want to be back in fandom. And then I was like, “I’ll just look a little bit,” and then it was like VORTEX.

6. Isn’t that what always happens?

3. And that’s what Tumblr is for, because I’ll keep seeing something on my dash and I’ll be like, “I’ll look into that, I’ll look into that,” and then it’s like, “fine, I’ll read this,” and
then I’m like, “ahhhh new fandom!” So I don’t know, I don’t really write that much original stuff these days but I still have ideas for them, I still think about it.

6. I’m a lurker.

7. Fair enough!

6. I think I wrote fanfic once or twice but I never actually posted it anywhere, so.

3. I write a lot more than I post. Or finish.

5. Finishing is so hard.

3. And I have a hard time – I know people like AUs and stuff but the fiction I like to read and write is filling in gaps in the actual stuff so as soon as something changes it’s like, “fuck, I’ve got to start all over.”

7. You’ve been Jossed!

[laughter]

3. I’ve been Jossed. So what I like about fanfiction is expounding on things that are actual canon. At the same time, if it’s just for sex then I’ll read it anyway.

[laughter]

4 Electronic Questionnaire

1. What is your age?

2. What is your gender?

3. How are you affiliated with library and information science? Check all that apply.

(a) I am a librarian

(b) I am a library paraprofessional

(c) I am a library volunteer

(d) I have worked in a library in the past, but do not currently

(e) I work as an information specialist

(f) I have worked as an information specialist in the past, but do not currently

(g) I have a college or graduate degree in information and/or library science
(h) I am currently studying for a degree in information and/or library science

(i) other – please specify

4. What fannish activities have you participated in? Check all that apply.

(a) writing fanfiction
(b) creating fanart
(c) creating fanvids
(d) cosplay
(e) writing meta
(f) creating primers
(g) making recs or rec lists
(h) favoriting, saving in memories, bookmarking, or otherwise publicly saving references to fannish content (as with Delicious, Pinboard, Livejournal, AO3, etc.)
(i) betaing
(j) leaving comments for the creators of fanworks
(k) writing for and/or editing fandom wikis
(l) RPs
(m) podficcing
(n) moderating fannish communities
(o) tag wrangling
(o) leaving prompts (for fanfiction, fanart, etc)
(p) creating fanmixes
(q) creating filk
(r) providing hosting and/or designing websites for fannish content
(s) publishing zines
(t) other – please specify
(u) none of the above (lurking)

5. What library and information science activities do you feel are central to your current, past or ideal library position or information science-related job? Check all that apply.
(a) cataloging/organization of information
(b) reader’s advisory
(c) collection development
(d) reference/research
(e) instructional sessions (in a school or public library environment)
(f) programming centered around crafts (for children or adults)
(g) storytime or other performative programs
(h) book groups
(i) some other type of library programming (please specify)
(j) managing or supervising other librarians or information specialists
(k) project management
(l) designing computer programs, websites, apps, etc.
(m) providing IT services
(n) other (please specify)

5. How and at what age did you become interested in fandom?

6. How and at what age did you become interested in library and information science?
7. Please describe what, if any, are the drawbacks (concrete and/or intangible) of participating in fandom in your view.

8. Please describe what, if any, are the benefits (concrete and/or intangible) of participating in fandom in your view.

9. Please describe how, if at all, participating in fandom has influenced your “real” life.
Appendix B: Glossary

AO3 – see Archive of Our Own
Archive of Our Own – an archive for fanworks owned and run by the Organization for Transformative Works
beta, beta-read, beta-reader – fandom terminology for an editor or editing
canon – the original work upon which a fandom is based
comm – common abbreviation for an online community
con – common abbreviation for a convention
cosplay – dressing up as a character (“costumed play”), usually in a performative context, such as while attending a convention, participating in a contest, or for a photoshoot
Delicious – a social bookmarking website which is frequently used by fans for purposes of archiving and/or recommending fanworks (www.delicious.com)
Dreamwidth – a journaling website which is home to a number of fannish personal accounts and communities (www.dreamwidth.org)
fanart – visual art which is based on an original work by a different creator
fandom – either the community of fans centered on a specific canon or the amorphous collective of all such individual fandoms
fanfic – abbreviation for fanfiction; also used to signify a single concrete work of fanfiction, rather than the abstract concept
fanfiction – fictional work which is based on an original work by a different creator
Fanlore – a multi-authored wiki run by the Organization for Transformative Works which seeks to record the history and present state of fandom
fanmix – a “mixtape” (usually an online playlist rather than a physical object) which in some way responds to an original work by a different creator
fanvid – a music video which is based on an original work by a different creator
fanzine – a magazine created by a fan or fans and centered on a fannish topic; fanzines may include fiction writing, nonfiction writing, or both
fic – see fanfiction
filk – a musical genre with close ties to science fiction/fantasy fandom, although it also applies more broadly to music written in response to any original work by a different creator
Livejournal – a journaling website which is home to a number of fannish personal accounts and communities (www.livejournal.com)
meta – originally used to refer to self-referential analysis within fandom (i.e. analysis of fanworks or fandom in general), meta has now come to refer more broadly as a noun to any analytical discussion, whether of fanworks or original source material, while the adjective maintains the stricter sense of a work which in some way refers back to itself
mod – abbreviation for either the noun “moderator” or the verb “moderate”
MV – abbreviation for music video; see fanvid
Organisation for Transformative Works – a nonprofit organization run by and for fans to provide access to and preserve the history of fanworks and fan cultures
OTW – see Organisation for Transformative Works
Pinboard – a social bookmarking website which is frequently used by fans for purposes of archiving and/or recommending fanworks (www.pinboard.in)
podfic – the fannish equivalent of audiobooks; individual fans audiorecord pieces of fanfiction
primer – an introduction (usually written, but also more informally, as in casual conversation) to a fandom or aspect of a fandom, such as a particular character or popular relationship
rec – common abbreviation for a recommendation or the verb to recommend, usually used of fanworks but also more broadly of any work
rec list – a collection of recs, often centered on a particular fandom or theme
ship – common abbreviation for a romantic relationship
Tumblr – a microblogging website which is frequently used by fans (www.tumblr.com)
vid – see fanvid
vidder – a person who creates fanvids
zine – see fanzine