



# ORIGIN

## **Monthly bulletin of the NFFF's Fandom Introductory Bureau**

This is the first issue of Origin, its purpose to keep members informed of the activities and progress of the bureau. We are devoted to giving members information about science fiction fandom and its activities and to help acquaint incoming members with the N3F. The bureau researches science fiction fandom's past as well as keeping up with the present. We want to have a view of science fiction fandom starting with the beginning and following it over the years.

Editor of this issue and bureau head is John Thiel, [kinethiel@comcast.net](mailto:kinethiel@comcast.net) . At present there are no other people in the bureau, but I'll be happy to have volunteers and I am thinking over people I might add to the bureau.

This issue presents my own summary of the development of science fiction fandom, much of which is gleaned from previous NFFF reading. One of my sources of information was Marion Zimmer Bradley, and another Sam Moskowitz, both earlier Neffers.

### **AN ELEMENTARY OVERVIEW OF SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY FANDOM**

Science fiction fandom originated from the readership of science fiction and fantasy magazines. Readers of the magazines would write to one another and interchange views in the magazine letter columns themselves. The first science fiction fanzine might have been Howard Phillips Lovecraft's **The Providence Amateur**, which was part of a non science fiction amateur press association relating more to newspapers and news publications than anything else. Lovecraft had been interested in **Weird Tales** for many years and was writing short stories that might have gone into that magazine, and he aspired to get them published there and told other readers about it. Another member of that organization started an elaborate fantasy magazine of the amateur variety and he and Lovecraft influenced other readers to join them, and what was called the Lovecraft Circle came to pass. They informed *Weird Tales* and *Amazing Stories* of their existence and offered to let readers view their publications, which were printed on real presses, not mimeographed like later fanzines. At that time *Amazing*, *Weird Tales* and *Air Wonder Stories* were the only sf and fantasy magazines in existence. The members of the circle were all thinking of developing work that could appear in those magazines, and they started doing so, with a tale by Lovecraft and a poem by Wandrei. After a time Robert Howard came into the field with a lengthy saga that caused more than one letter writer to express appreciation. These people would also write to authors and readers of science fiction to discuss it, and their correspondence started appearing in their magazines, which became fan magazines. Other people joined them at amateur editing, among them Charles Burbee, who presented a publication that had in it the minutes of a scientific society which the publication represented. Other members of that society were interested in science fiction. Burbee's publication was a cornerstone of what later was called First Fandom, with the Circle being referred to as Proto Fandom. The magazine editors became highly interested in the fanzines, which gave them feedback. More such magazines came into being, perhaps due in part to their observation of the public demand which fandom represented. There was *Astounding* and *Famous Fantastic Mysteries*, and the epochal *Startling Stories*. In *Startling*, Sam Moscovitz gave fanzines their first big reviews. Formerly they were mentioned in the letter columns and sometimes simply listed.

Wilson Tucker and Robert Bloch got together on establishing the first science fiction amateur press association. Bloch was in with Lovecraft and the rest, Tucker was somewhat remote. The term "Fandom" was suggested by Rick Snearly, who was often seen in the *Startling* letter column and occasionally in the letter columns of other magazines, a prototypical fan. The many fanzines that were starting to appear gave substance to fandom. A science fiction convention was proposed and held by the magazine people, its purpose being for all the editors and publishers to discuss plans for the future of science fiction and to discuss where it fit into the culture. Fans were not that much present at the first one, but thereafter were invited, and editorials presented description of the conventions. The conventions were held once yearly.

Science fiction societies were starting to appear all over the country, along with clubs and other methods of getting together. The National Fantasy Fan Federation came along with the

purpose of consolidating and rationalizing all this activity. Science fiction and fantasy magazines began to proliferate. Fanzines with a literary approach began to discuss science fiction and what it was, as the editors had been doing in their editorials. Science fiction was well established in the late fifties. When I entered fandom I was informed by somebody in the N3F that I was in eighth fandom. I placed in the history of science fiction with the Junior International Science Fiction Club, for people in my age range. The ultimate membership age was 21. The group was influential and was making for livelier fanzines, and developed its own apa, started by Richard Brown, called the Junion Association of SF Publishers. After a time there were people in it trying to start Ninth Fandom, an apocalyptic fandom to be followed by a post-apocalyptic tenth fandom. We were not heard of by the quieter and more ser-con element of fandom very much, although Science Fiction Adventures notified fandom of our existence, as Other Worlds already had. The sixties fandom was rather apocalyptic, with, unfortunately, a lot of warfare in it. A proliferation of conventions were occurring and fandom became rather discursive from these widespread activities, no longer effectively being consolidated. I am hoping that the NFFF will continue its function of examining and consolidating fandom, and that is the reason I have had for asking to establish this bureau within the NFFF. I hope we will continue to develop.

In future issues I hope we will be able to fill readers in with further details on the sketch of fandom I have just written, and letters discussing the past of fandom as seen by NFFF members are welcome.

