

# FANPRO

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## Ionisphere #48, October 2025

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Cover art: Hugh Ferriss, 1922

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### Editorial

This issue of Ionisphere is all about SFF contests and features interviews with Dream Foundry's Julia Rios & Anaea Lay, the N3F's Jefferson Swycaffer, SFPA President Brian U. Garrison, Writers & Illustrators of the Future Contest Director Joni Labaqui, and Utopia Science Fiction's Tristan Evarts. So, get ready to pull out your pens and brushes and send your work into this wide variety of opportunities for writers and artists. This issue also features an interview with Andrew Lippert, curator of the *Neon in the Gutters* cyberpunk exhibition at the Eaton Collection at UCR. I was fortunate enough to attend the reception, get some pictures, and have the opportunity to speak with Mr. Lippert.

In the last issue I mentioned that I was working on a directory of SFFH resources, and it is still in the works (hopefully to be printed in the next issue). But it has proved to be a larger task than anticipated. Still, I think it will be worth the wait.

I'll be running free ads for books by N3F members, so send those in if you have them. ¼ page is ideal for the ads. Likewise, if members have new books coming out, please get in touch about a possible interview. I also encourage all amateur writers in the club to submit to the N3F short story contest. You've got nothing to lose!

As always, letters of comment welcome. I'd love to hear what you think of the zine.

Jean-Paul L. Garnier  
Joshua Tree, CA  
October 2025

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### Letters of Comment

I'm glad you retained the spelling. I wanted to use the term but did not want it considered a scientific publication. I also wanted "Is" rather than "no" as it would sound less negative. The change in spelling sets the zine apart from science. —John Thiel



**Dream Foundry Emerging Writers & Artists Contests: an interview with Julia Rios & Anaea Lay**

<https://dreamfoundry.org/>

*How and why were the Dream Foundry contests created?*

The contests for emerging Artists and Writers were the first two formal programs launched by Dream Foundry after our founding. We're designed to be a multi-disciplinary organization that supports early career creatives of all stripes, and these contests were seen as a way to launch that mission, as well as a good outreach tool to the people we want to support. We consulted with various folks across the industry as we were setting up, and used that input to develop a five year plan, with the contests and our capacity to support the winners at the center of it. Then we did an initial crowdfunding campaign, with the goal being to raise enough money to get up and running and start proper recruiting for contest administrators, judges, and entrants. It was significantly more successful than we expected, so we launched the

contests a year early, with an experimental "year 0" and we haven't looked back since.

*What are the goals and aims of the contests?*

We want the contests to serve as a goal that inspires folks who are starting out to keep working. For the winners, we want to provide the kind of support, both in terms of literal money and in terms of networking, education, and support, that the win represents a real and meaningful boost to their career and makes it easier for them to achieve their individual goals.

*How does the contest support aspiring writers and artists?*

We do a few things. One, we provide an annual deadline for having submission-ready completed work. As a professional creative, I know from personal experience, never underestimate the power of a firm deadline!

Beyond that, we have a community on our Discord where entrants, and aspiring entrants, can get support and advice from other creatives, share their own experiences, and generally support each other. There's a dedicated space specifically for contest-related chatting and hanging out, which lets contest participants form a bond amongst themselves. We do a lot to support our finalists and winners specifically, but I wouldn't consider them "aspiring." They might be early career, but they *are* writers and artists.

*Many contests define "amateur" differently, how does the contest define what an amateur writer is?*

We try to take into account all the different ways writers can become professional. One

thing we care about at Dream Foundry is recognizing that all paths to publication are valid, including both traditional publishing and self-publishing. Because of that, we define beginning writers as those who have published a total of less than 4,000 words of paid or income-earning speculative fiction in English. This means fanfic doesn't count towards the total, but an ebook that has been offered for sale does. Beyond that, the emerging writers who are eligible for our contest must not have earned more than \$320 for their work, so they might have sold a short story or two that total less than 4,000 words, but they must not have made more than \$320 for their sale(s). Finally, the emerging writers who are eligible for our contest must not have been nominated for major awards, and they must not have already won our contest in the past. All of these guidelines are in place to ensure that we focus on writers who are at the beginning stages of their writing journey. It's not a perfect system, but it does mean that once the writers who have entered in a previous year start getting published, we can celebrate their ineligibility. We're always happy to hear about their successes!

*Aside from bragging rights, what prizes are available to winning writers and artists?*

We have cash prizes for winners: \$1500 for first place, \$750 for second place, \$400 for third place. Finalists and winners get to attend first dibs on limited seating sessions at Flights of Foundry, our annual virtual international multidisciplinary convention. Those seats range from workshop sessions to pitching opportunities, or small group conversations with working professionals. Winners are showcased at Flights of Foundry,

getting a session dedicated to featuring them and their work for our audience of attendees. For the artists, when we need to commission artwork, we go to past winners on our first pass for recruiting, so sometimes it leads to commissions. We've also had a few situations where writing contest winners and finalists have had their entered stories solicited for publication by one of the judges, so the entry led to a sale of their work.

*How does the judging process work?*

Our contest coordinator reads and considers every story and selects ten finalists. This is always a long and difficult process as there are many excellent stories in the running! During this process, the stories are all in individual files and formatted as the entrants sent them in. Once the ten finalist stories are selected, they are packaged into one single format style packet and sent to the judges, who read and discuss them and select the winners. At this stage the stories are anonymous, though we will pass along any info the entrants share in a cover letter (for example, if the story is about a subject the writer has personal experience with, or if the author notes that the reader should have the context of a significant historical event in mind). We have two judges each time so that they can have a healthy discussion and reach a consensus.

*Over the years, what have been some of the highlights of the contests?*

For me (Anaea), getting to work with winners to design their showcases for Flights of Foundry is a huge personal highlight. We don't dictate the format of the showcase, so we let the winner take the lead on whether it's

a presentation, a demo, an interview, a performance of their work, or what have you. Finding a format that they want, and making the arrangements to support it, is a really special and rewarding part of the convention planning and I look forward to it every year.

For me (Julia), getting to see how much the judges love all the finalists' stories and getting to let the finalists know about that is always a highlight. It's wonderful to be able to read new and exciting work by emerging writers and to share some good news with them!

*What are some things that writers and artists should know before entering the contests?*

Being a professional is about how you conduct yourself and value your work, not about how far into your career you are. If you want to "be a professional" all you have to do is put together your portfolio or polish your story, send it in, and know that whatever the outcome of that decision, you're going to do roughly the same thing eleven billion more times. Beyond that, you have to begin your career somewhere, and you deserve for it to be somewhere that respects you and your work, and wants to help you grow. We're doing everything we can to be that place for as many people as possible.

We always get so many more wonderful stories than we can choose as finalists. The odds are that your story won't be selected, but that definitely doesn't mean it wasn't good! We think you have made a small victory just by putting together a submission packet. Bonus points if you also join our Discord and connect with other past and present writing contest participants. Writing is a lonely

pursuit a lot of the time, so finding your community as a writer is a great thing.

*Many contests cost money to enter, what was behind the decision to have the contest be free to enter?*

Charging folks who are early career for the possibility of recognition and validation is a scam, and we aren't here to run a scam. We know that some opportunities for early career writers do include services like workshops and critiques, and we understand if writers are tempted to pay for those, but our goal has always been to offer free resources to creatives. We want to make opportunities for writers and artists to shine, to connect, and to share knowledge regardless of how much (or little) money they have.

*When does the contest run each year?*

The contest usually runs in the spring with judging happening over the summer. The best way to stay up to date is to subscribe to our newsletter.

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**The National Fantasy Fan Federation  
Short Story Contest: an interview with  
Jefferson Swycaffer**

<https://tnfff.org/short-story-contest/>

*How and why was the N3F short story contest created?*

Long ago, in a galaxy far, far away. The contest pre-dates me by decades, and I haven't the slightest idea how long ago it was founded.

*What are the goals and aims of the contest?*

To celebrate and reward beginning writers in their efforts to create science fiction and fantasy. In a way, it's self-serving, as I'm promoting the kind of fiction that I, myself, most love to read. But it's a way to connect, to support, to encourage new writers. Some of the entrants are going to go on to real careers in the field, and it's fun to say, "I knew them when they were beginners." There is also a small teaching role here, as I supply each entrant with a very brief critique, which, I hope, is always constructive and positive. There are many entrants whose writing is already mature and beyond

anything I could possibly say in terms of advice.

*How does the contest support aspiring writers?*

We give them a little publicity, a little prize-money, a little constructive feed-back, and, in the case of the winners, a fanzine market offer. It's all very little, but it's a reward gladly offered for the entrants' imagination and effort.

*Many contests define "amateur" differently, how does the contest define what an amateur writer is?*

I want real beginners, so, please, no one who has made a professional sale – an actual sale to a paying market. We want to see new names, new writers, people who are taking their first steps into the great world of science fiction and fantasy.

*Aside from bragging rights, what prizes are available to winning writers?*

We offer cash prizes: \$50 for the first place winner, \$30 for the second place winner, \$20 for the third place winner, and, alas, bragging rights and no more for the Honorable Mention, or fourth place winner. We also invite the winners to allow us to publish their stories in our club fanzines.

*How does the judging process work?*

To begin with, it's blind, as the entrants' names do not appear on their stories. This is the best protection I can offer against prejudice, preference, or any conflict of interest. I read all the stories with my full attention, and rate them on a 1 to 10 scale. This scale isn't the final judgement, but

merely a mnemonic, to remind me which stories were the most promising. I then re-read the best stories, and make the final judgement. My primary criterion is quality of writing, including standards of grammar and composition. My next criterion is imagination. I want stories that make me perk up and stare in amazement. I want stories where I can honestly say, “I didn’t expect that!” and “I’ve never seen that before!” The next criterion is related to the first: good writing in terms of visual description, solid dialogue, and good characterization.

*Over the years, what have been some of the highlights of the contest, and some of the notable winners?*

I wouldn’t want to single anyone out, and there have been so many! The true highlights, as I just mentioned, are when I am astonished by an imaginative twist, a stunning plot detail, a brilliant bit of characterization, or an amazing science fictional or fantasy concept. Science fiction is said to be the literature of ideas, and a great idea is a sure-fire way of earning my favor in the judging process. There have been hundreds of truly magnificent stories over all the years of the contest!

*What are some things that writers should know before entering the contest?*

Well, the basics of grammar and composition are important. It is rare – it has happened! – for a story that has bad grammar or composition to get rewarded by the contest. I try not to be a grammar fascist, and spelling itself isn’t all that important to me, but if a story has problems with the basics, it is going to hurt. After that, it’s all the way open! Let

yourself go! Dive deep into those dark unconscious places in your soul, those ideas that maybe frighten you just a little. Create characters you like, characters you’d love to sit down and have lunch with. Dream! This is a contest of dream-work!

*Many contests cost money to enter, what was behind the decision to have the contest be free to enter?*

The decision was made so long ago, I have no idea what motivated it. I think it is grand, as we are offering something – not much, but something! – in return for imagination and creativity.

*When does the contest run each year?*

It runs the full calendar year: the contest opens on January 1st, and ends December 31st. I have been known to offer an informal extension for entrants for a day or two past the deadline, but, please, don’t count on it or abuse it. Judging is usually complete by January 20th.

I need to say: the contest has been dwindling in the past few years. I’m getting fewer and fewer entries, and this breaks my heart. I am personally incapable of marketing and publicity, but N3F President George Phillis has been doing wonders in letting people know about the contest. I have had years, alas, where we simply didn’t get enough entries to justify holding the contest. I have had other years where we only had barely enough entries to make a go of it. I’d far rather have too many than too few! I do not know how to promote the contest, but I thank you very much for allowing me to answer your questions about it and to shed a little light into the process of running the contest.



**The Science Fiction & Fantasy Poetry Association's Speculative Poetry Contest: an interview with SFPA President Brian U. Garrison**

<https://sfpoetry.org/>

*What are the goals and aims of the SFPA poetry contest?*

The contest provides the Science Fiction & Fantasy Poetry Association another way to showcase excellent poetry! One piece I really appreciate about the contest is being able to read the judge's comments. Hearing another reader's perspective as they say "I liked this poem because..." adds layers to the process that we don't often get when encountering other poems in the wild.

It does, sort of, serve as a fundraiser. The balance sheet runs pretty close to break-even. New-to-us poets learn about the SFPA through the contest, so it may be more like marketing instead of fundraising. Having more members and more poets in the community is good!

*How long has the contest been operating?*

The Science Fiction & Fantasy Poetry Association's contest started in 2006 with Karen A. Romanko as the inaugural coordinator. It has operated in its current form since 2013.

*Aside from bragging rights, what prizes are available to winning poets?*

Awards are given to the top three poems in each length category: Dwarf (1-10 lines), Short (11-49 lines), and Long (50+ lines). Prose poems are counted at 10 words per line, so maximum of 100 words for a prose poem to be categorized as dwarf. The amounts are:

1st Prize: \$150

2nd Prize: \$75

3rd Prize: \$25

*How does the judging process work?*

Hopefully submitters are sending nameless/anonymized files, but we have a coordinator who checks submissions when they arrive. Poems are sent only as title and text to the judge, who reads through and picks the ones that call to them. So, it really is up to the words themselves to speak to the heart of the specific person judging that year.

*What is a highlight that has come out of the contest over the years?*

Every now and then, a poem from the contest will go on to be nominated for the Rhysling Award. In a whirlwind of success, F.J. Bergmann's second-prize poem (long) also took first place in the Rhysling long category. With a title like "100 Reasons to have Sex with an Alien," you start to get a sense of why the poem stuck with readers!

*What are some things that poets should know before entering the contest?*

You can submit as many as you want! Our current technology is arranged to accept batches if they are part of the same length category, so it's easiest if you submit dwarf, short, and/or long as separate files.

*How much does the contest cost to enter, and how are the fees used?*

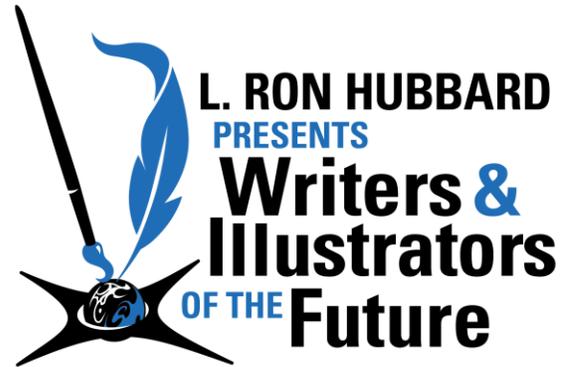
Each poem you want to enter is \$3. Most of the money goes to the winning poets, and the judge is paid a small honorarium for their effort. Any sliver remaining goes to the SFPA general fund.

*When does the contest run each year?*

The contest runs from June 1 through August 31.

Further details online:  
<https://sfpoetry.org/wp/annual-contest>

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**Writers & Illustrators of the Future: an interview with Contest Director Joni Labaqui**

<https://writersofthefuture.com/>

*How and why were the Writers & Illustrators of the Future contests created?*

L. Ron Hubbard knew how hard it is to break into the writing field and wanted to pay it forward to new writers. He laid down the groundwork: No fee to enter, prizes given out quarterly. He also wanted it judged anonymously, so that everyone is given a chance.

The winners of this Contest are published in an "annual anthology." This is the introduction by L. Ron Hubbard that appears in *L. Ron Hubbard Presents Writers of the Future Volume 1*, 1985.

"A culture is as rich and as capable of surviving as it has imaginative artists. The artist is looked upon to start things. The artist injects the spirit of life into a culture. And through his creative endeavors, the writer works continuously to give tomorrow a new form. In these modern times, there are many communication lines for works of art. Because a few works of art can be shown so

easily to so many, there may even be fewer artists. The competition is very keen and even dagger sharp.

It is with this in mind that I initiated a means for new and budding writers to have a chance for their creative efforts to be seen and acknowledged. With the advent of the Writers of the Future competition came an avalanche of new material from all over the country.

And with that came the idea of creating a book that would contain the winners of the quarterly judges' decisions.... And my heartiest congratulations to those they selected for this first volume. I am very proud to present the winners.

Good luck to all other writers of the future.

And good reading." -- L. Ron Hubbard

The Contest is international; any non-professional from any country may enter, but the story must be presented in English.

The Illustrators of the Future Contest started 4 years later.

L. Ron Hubbard funded it while alive, and his will stipulated that it continue to be funded through the royalties from the sale of his books.

*What are the goals and aims of the contest?*

The goals and aims of this contest is launching careers for new budding writers and illustrators.

*How does the contest support aspiring writers?*

It gives you a deadline 4 times a year.

You get encouragement to continue your writing or illustrating.

We have an award winning [podcast](#) with all kinds of famous industry professionals giving you advice in the field (there are over 300 of these).

We have a [free online workshop](#) with several of our award-winning, New York Times bestselling judges: Kevin J. Anderson, Orson Scott Card, David Farland, Tim Powers, Nnedi Okorafor & Robert J. Sawyer. The course includes video lectures from each of the above. Also, there are several articles by L. Ron Hubbard on the subject of writing in this workshop as well.

You can start and stop the workshop on your own time and at your own pace. You can listen to the lectures as often as you wish and from here on out. It does not "time-out" on you. The knowledge is there for you at any time. IT IS FREE!

We have a blog filled with articles that will benefit you.

We have a forum as well.

*Many contests define "amateur" differently. How does the contest define what an amateur writer is?*

An amateur in our eyes has *no* Big Five book contract, where you are paid an advance and a promise of royalties and the print run is over 5,000, *or less* than three short story sales that are paid professional rates and have over 5,000 circulation, and are actually published.

Self-publishing does NOT count on this "professional" sale, because it isn't a "sale."

Vanity Publishing is also NOT a professional sale.

*Aside from bragging rights, what prizes are available to winning writers and artists?*

You get paid prize money as a winner; you get paid to be published in the book.

We fly you here to Hollywood for a week-long workshop taught by our judges, and you also get a gala awards ceremony. We pay for your flight and hotel. We put you up in the same hotel they use for the Academy Awards here in Hollywood.

You make life-long friends with winners from your year.

*How does the judging process work?*

We have several first readers; once they have selected what the coordinating judge will look at, the coordinating judge selects each story's category. The stories are chosen for the following categories: Disqualified (was way over the word count limit of 17,000 words, or was plagiarized, or was poetry, or was any other form of writing not science fiction, fantasy, or light horror); No win (no set number); Honorable Mention (no set number), Silver Honorable Mention (no set number), Semi-Finalist (no set number but generally between eight and ten), eight Finalists, and three winners. The three winners are chosen from the eight Finalists each quarter.

*Over the years, what have been some of the highlights of the contest, and some of the notable winners?*

We've held our annual event to celebrate our winners at NASA (3 times), the United Nations, and in Hollywood.

New York Times careers we have helped launch include: Nnedi Okorafor, Patrick Rothfuss, Jo Beverley, Kevin J. Anderson, Tobias S. Buckell, Dean Wesley Smith, Shaun Tan, Brittany Jackson, Kirbi Fagan, Sean Williams, Nancy Farmer, Eric Flint, Lisa Smedman, Karen Joy Fowler, Elizabeth Wein and Tim Myers.

*What are some things that writers and artists should know before entering the contest?*

Read our rules thoroughly. You should do that when you submit ANYWHERE. It's professional to do so.

Your entry needs to be obviously science fiction or fantasy to qualify. You can certainly edit a longer story if you have one but make sure you edit it so that it has a proper ending.

This is an excellent way to start a career. You don't even have to stay in science fiction or fantasy. Four of our winners who became New York Times bestselling authors became so in *other* genres: one in Historical Romance, one in general Fiction, and two in Children's Books.

Don't think about using AI. It only hinders you as a writer or an artist. It does not "help" you.

*Many contests cost money to enter, what was behind the decision to have the contest be free to enter?*

It is all part of L. Ron Hubbard's plan, this contest is part of his legacy, you shouldn't have to pay for it.

*When does the contest run each year?*

The contest has never stopped in the past 42 years. It is "quarterly" (4 times a year). You are allowed to enter once per quarter until you win.

The quarters are:

1 October through 31 December -1st Quarter

1 January through 31 March - 2nd Quarter

1 April through 30 June - 3rd Quarter

1 July through 30 September - 4th Quarter

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**Utopia Science Fiction Magazine Art Contest: an interview with Tristan Evarts**

<https://www.utopiasciencefiction.com/>

*How and why was the Utopia Science Fiction Magazine Art Contest created?*

I started the Art Contest as a way to engage with all the incredible sci-fi and fantasy artists out there all around the world. There's always been a special connection between science fiction and art; the way it inspires and imagines. The art contest was a fun way to engage and promote artists.

*What are the goals and aims of the contest?*

Ultimately to find a work we can use as cover art, but really along the way it's just great to see what people are out there creating. We get so many creative submissions in. When we first started out we had maybe 18 submissions, but the past couple years we've gotten over 50. We bring in our Patreon folks to help us create a short list from which our editors choose the winners; it's a process, but through that process we get a lot of engagement and hopefully give people some confidence to continue creating.

*How does the contest support aspiring artists?*

We hope it gives an opportunity to artists (to win a cash prize, but also to have their

artwork featured as Cover Art) that they might not otherwise find.

*Aside from bragging rights, what prizes are available to winning artists?*

First place will receive \$50 and have their work featured as cover art for our August issue, 2nd and 3rd receive \$45 and have their artwork featured as internal artwork in a later issue. Everyone who enters gets a free copy of the magazine, so everyone wins something no matter how they place

*How does the judging process work?*

It goes through a few rounds. First we have the editors and readers of the magazine look through the submission and choose their top three favourites to form a long list. Then we let our Patreon supporters look through the long list and vote on their favourites. That creates the short list. We then go back to the senior editors and have them select the top three from the short list. I work on a point system at that point, where 1st place selections get 3 points, 2nd gets 2 and 3rd gets one. Whichever work gets the most points gets the 1st place prize for the contest.

*Over the years, what have been some of the highlights of the contest, and some of the notable winners?*

I don't know if that's a question I can answer, there have been so many highlights and all of the submissions are incredible.

*What are some things that artists should know before entering the contest?*

I think the one thing I'd like to press to anyone is that you don't lose by entering, a lot of our contest submissions also have their work

showcased in our December Special Art issue which is dedicated to science fiction artists. We accept just about any medium, and love science fiction and also science illustrations. The first year we did the contest a science illustrator actually won first place for their work. Admittedly photography doesn't often win, though they do make the long lists and occasionally the short list.

*Many contests cost money to enter, what was behind the decision to have the contest be free to enter?*

You should never have to pay to enter a contest. While not always true, oftentimes those contests are more interested in generating someone's profit and aren't doing the contest for the entrant's benefit. That's something we'll never do at Utopia as it's rather the antithesis of what we stand for and hope to promote. We want the contest to be open to everyone, regardless of their finances - and I think we get a lot more diverse artwork that gets into the competition because of it and seeing that is its own reward.

*When does the contest run each year?*

Dates change every year by a few days, but in general we give the month of mid-June and mid-July for the contest to run. We just need to make sure it ends with enough time for us to select a winner and get the artwork on our August cover which comes out August 1st. It can be a tight deadline, but it's worked for us so far!

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## EATON COLLECTION

### **Neon in the Gutters: Cyberpunk Visions at the Eaton Collection of Science Fiction & Fantasy: an interview with Curator Andrew Lippert**

<https://library.ucr.edu/current-exhibits/2025/04/21/neon-gutters-cyberpunk-visions-future>

*What prompted the decision to have the focus of the exhibition cyberpunk?*

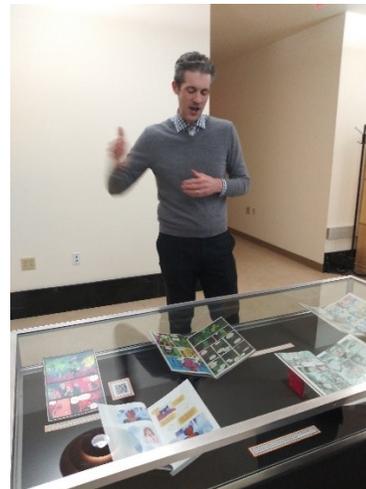
It was largely curiosity on my part. I was introduced to the work of [Gustaffo Vargas](#) with his *Altiplano* trilogy and had never really come across cyberpunk comics prior to that. I started digging around and fell down a bit of a rabbit hole. Additionally, we rotate exhibits in our department and it was my turn, so I was on the hunt for a topic or theme. Comics are a ton of fun, very visually engaging in an exhibit space, and the themes of cyberpunk feel all too timely in our current moment. It all just fit together nicely!

*With so many mediums to choose from, what made you decide to have comic books and graphic novels be the focus of the exhibit?*

Comics librarianship has been an area of interest and professional growth for me the last few years and this gave me an excuse to

lean into that journey a bit more. Comics are having a bit of a moment in higher education in recent years, gaining credibility and usage in the classroom, and is a medium that definitely draws people into the Special Collections department that might not otherwise know about us. It was also an opportunity to showcase comics from the Eaton Collection, which I feel is a lesser known segment of the collection.

*The catalog mentions cultural issues being projected into digital spaces, and today we actually see the inverse of this situation as well. What do you think makes cyberpunk a sub-genre particularly well equipped to handle this topic?*



When it comes to cyberpunk, it is the "punk" portion that gives it its unique character and ethos, that influence from the broader cultural punk movement. There are now many different "-punk" literary sub-genres, but a lot of times they are purely aesthetic and do not capture that rage against the machine that you find in cyberpunk. There is always going to be a visual element that so many people associate with cyberpunk, but, for me, under that aesthetic surface is a scathing critique of

power dynamics, wealth inequality, megacorporations, industrialism, etc.

*What are some of the major thematic shifts that you've seen in cyberpunk over its four decades of being part of the SF field?*

One major shift is a move away from the Japanese cultural influences of early cyberpunk, being a product of the 1980s and 1990s when Japan was an ascendent economic power. A common antagonist of early cyberpunk was the Japanese industrialist, whereas now you often see a Silicon Valley tech billionaire in that role. A second thematic shift is casting technology as a stand in for drug addiction. You would occasionally see this in early cyberpunk, mostly focused on people preferring cyberspace to reality. However, these themes have become much more explicit and graphic, at least in cyberpunk comics and graphic novels from the last couple decades. Cybernetics and prosthetics are also a bit less prevalent in newer cyberpunk, often being replaced by some sort of nanobots that are injected into the body or consumed.



*The exhibition features several webcomics. What challenges does an archivist and curator face when bringing these digital*

*mediums into the physical space of the library?*

Yes! There are two examples from the webcomic [Drugs & Wires](#) by Mary Safro and Io Black. There are so many skilled creators working in the webcomic space that I felt it was important to figure out a way to include the digital comics medium in the exhibit. This was also just such a fun comic that nailed a number of the themes I wanted to touch on in the exhibit. We initially contemplated using a tablet, but that posed many logistical problems around putting it in an exhibit case, charging it, turning it on and off, etc. My colleague, the library's Conservator, came up with the brilliant idea of printing the chosen excerpts onto a metallic Japanese paper. This gives the impression of backlighting, as you would see with an LCD screen, and also a touch of depth. On a whim, I reached out to the creators of the comics and they were kind enough to send me high-res copies of the two pages in question so we could get really high quality prints. They turned out fantastic!

*As tech increasingly becomes a part of our daily lives, where do you see cyberpunk as a genre going next, and do you think it has the potential of predictive qualities, or will it be a reaction to our tech culture?*

I do not necessarily see cyberpunk ever having the influence or cultural impact again like it had in the mid-80s to early 90s. I do think it will stick with us and there will continue to be cyberpunk themes or elements finding their way into plenty of works (be that comics, movies, games, etc.) with the occasional hit that resonates with the zeitgeist. Cyberpunk is often coopted purely for its aesthetics, but, in doing this exhibit, I

have firmly come to view cyberpunk as a critical or analytical toolset we can apply to our current cultural and technological landscape. In this sense, I see it as more reactive than predictive. A lot of the predictions of early cyberpunk never came to fruition (hello metaverse!), but maybe that just needs to be qualified with a "yet." I guess we will have to wait and see...

*What are some of the main takeaways and responses that you hope to invoke with students and visitors to the exhibition?*

Archives are always fighting an uphill battle with regard to outreach and letting people know we are here and have cool stuff. So, at a most basic level, I hope that this exhibit results in more people (whether students or the general public) knowing about us and our collections. Beyond that, I think cyberpunk offers a unique pathway to understand and critique the relationship between society/culture and technology. If this exhibit gets people thinking a bit more about the device in their pocket, and their relationship to it, or the power of Silicon Valley in our society, then I consider it a success!



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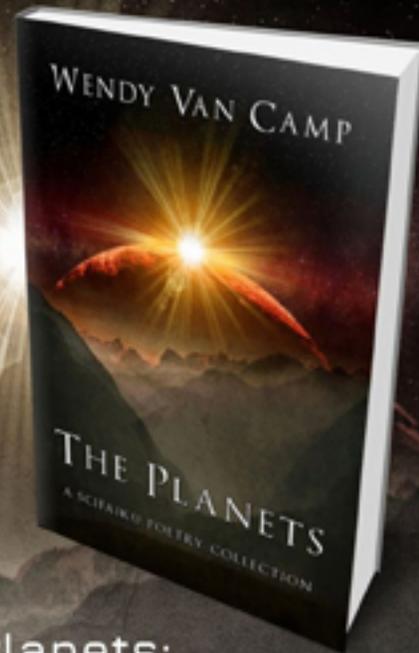
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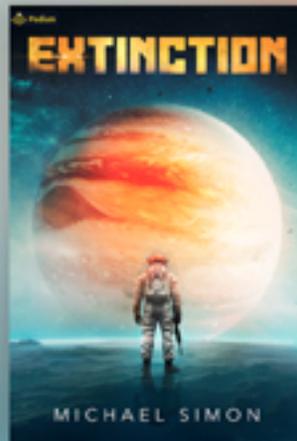
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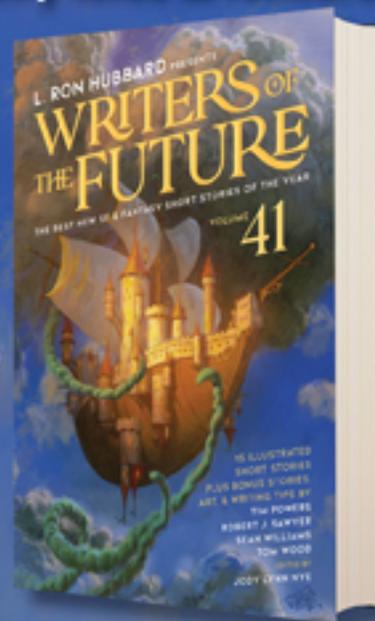
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We are here to encourage new writers, to reward the new kids on the block. We want writing that is not that good. We want stories from people who don't know their object from their subject, who don't know where commas go, and who use apostrophes to denote plurals -- but who have a story to tell. We want stories from guys and gals nobody's ever heard of...but in the years ahead, we will.

1. This contest is open to all amateur writers in the field, regardless of whether they're members of the National Fantasy Fan Federation. For the purposes of this contest, we define an amateur as someone who has sold no more than two (2) stories to professional science fiction or fantasy publications.
2. Stories entered in the contest must be original, unpublished, not longer than 8,500 words in length—and related to the science fiction, fantasy, or similar genres in the opinion of the judge.
3. Email attachments of Word documents are acceptable for submission. Manuscripts on paper should be typed, single sided on 8 1/2"-by- 11" white paper, double spaced, with pages numbered. The name of the author should not appear anywhere on the manuscript to ensure impartial judging. Photocopies are acceptable, if they are of good quality. Computer printouts must be legible.
4. Contestants can enter up to three stories. Enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) if you would like your story returned at the end of the contest. Stories will not be returned without an SASE. Do not send your only copy in case of accidental loss. We are not responsible for lost manuscripts.
5. Email entries will be accepted. Send to Jefferson P. Swycaffer at [abontides@gmail.com](mailto:abontides@gmail.com). No guarantee can be made of email receipt. Privacy and property rights will be absolutely respected. No one other than the Short Story Judge will ever see the submission.
6. There are no entry fees.
7. Cash prizes totaling \$100 will be awarded as follows: First prize is \$50, second \$30, and third \$20. Honorable mentions and semi-finalists will receive a certificate of award.
8. Send all manuscripts to the contest manager: Jefferson Swycaffer, P. O. Box 15373, San Diego, CA 92175-5373; [abontides@gmail.com](mailto:abontides@gmail.com). Emails with the story attached in word format are preferred. Paper manuscripts are acceptable. All entries must be received or postmarked no later than Dec. 31, 2025.
9. The Short Story Judge is a published science fiction professional, and also a loving fan of the sf and fantasy genres. All comments and critiques are solely the Short Story Judge's opinion, but he promises to be constructive and polite.
10. Stories will also be reviewed by the Editor of the N3F Fiction zine *Eldritch Science*; authors of suitable tales will be invited to submit their tales for publication in our zine. This review and invitation will only occur after contest winners have been announced, so it can have no effect on the contest outcome.
11. The NSF may want to publish an electronic book including top entries from one or more years of publication. You will not be contacted about this until after the contest is over and prizes have been awarded. If we want to publish your story, you will have to sign over to us first world serial rights. Your willingness to sign over rights cannot affect whether or not you win the contest. Winners will be notified as soon as the judging is completed. Announcements and notifications of winning entries will be made by March 2026. Please take your time and submit your best work. You can resubmit stories previously entered if they did not win previously. All entries will be kept confidential and will be judged fairly and anonymously. The deadline for all entries is Dec. 31, 2025. Good luck!