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Building Bridges II: Papers from the FanLIS 2024 Symposium

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As innovators in both creative expression and its documentation, fans have consistently turned to the latest technological advances in their creative and information practices. The affordances of recent technologies, including the metaverse, special computing, generative AI, and 3D printing, allow fans to engage in fandom in ever more inventive and novel ways.

Thus, our original call for papers focused on two areas of interest. Firstly, for updates to documentation practice around traditional media (costume, print, audio, video), and secondly for papers detailing creative practice in, and documentation of, new media, (AI, interactive, temporal, or immersive experiences).

The diverse set of papers presented at FanLIS 2024 evidences a continued emphasis on the material production of fans, their information behaviour, and the organisation of fanworks. Nonetheless, new media continues to be a key area of interest to us, as the recording and discovery of fan works and experiences which embrace transmedia, temporality, presence and multi-user participation falls within our overarching domain of document theory. We must also be mindful of ethical implications (privacy, copyright, mis/disinformation), which will become more relevant as fans create and participate in 'immersive' works (see Hine et al., 2024).

Here the realms of fandom and library and information science combine with the worlds of gaming, with the consequent potential for a huge number of new fanworks and experiences. We subsequently also progress from documenting an individual work, to documenting one or more participant experiences of interacting with the work. This is not an entirely novel consideration, as the value of recording multiplayer digital gaming experiences has previously been discussed within the gaming community (Shipman, Frank & Marshall, 2014). What is new to us, is the transition of experience to fandom/fanworks, as immersive environments become more technologically achievable and hence more widely accessible.

It is worth noting that true immersive documents offer a scripted version of reality which is indistinguishable from actual reality, and we are still some way from this as yet. However, immersive media approaching full or true immersion are available now. Already immersive, interactive or augmented realities are part of the fan experience—The Wizarding World of Harry Potter, and Middle-earth in New Zealand (Baker, Eddy & Bailey, 2022), are examples of the fannish desire for immersion in scripted realities.

The recording and documentation of transmedia, interactive documents is addressed by the British Library within their Emerging Formats project, and was the focus of our Documenting Performance project.

Moving back to fanworks, Naomi Jacobs, in one of our papers, proposes the speculative futures of interactive metaverse archiving, based upon her research into

the alternate reality game and associated fiction, *Blow the Man Down*, which emerged from the fandom of the wildly popular TV series *Our Flag Means Death.*

Likewise, the impact and role of AI is unavoidable. One of our papers, by Tom Ue and Callum McNutt, considered whether AI could write as well as the seemingly generative works churned out by the TV networks. AI will certainly impact scripts, artwork, music and lyrics. Indeed, fans have used free online tools such as DALL-E 2 to create fanart, or to generate ideas and "enhance artistic processes" in fannish projects (Mussies, 2023). Such technology may also allow fans to more fully experience and envision fictional worlds, in ways they were not able to before. The use of generative AI has however, recently raised concerns around plagiarism, and this may impact open fan practice (Grynbaum and Mac, 2023). We need to be aware of this and how AI will continue to affect fanworks. Compare this to recent industrial action by actors and writers within films, TV shows and gaming, and the more recent action by voice actors. We are therefore interested to see how immersive worlds and AI contribute to our next FanLIS symposium.

Not to abandon the continually vibrant sphere of more traditional fanworks, we note copyright as a key concern. Ethan Milne's paper discusses fanfiction through the lens of copyright violation. Refreshingly, this research sidesteps the legality of the fanfiction to focus on how such copyright violations—and the encouragement of fanfiction authorship—may benefit and even aid in the promotion of new intellectual properties.

Metadata, and the organisation of fanworks, continues to be a key area of development. As with other, wider reaching projects such as Towards a National Collection, the heterogeneous nature of metadata associated with fanworks proves problematic in establishing central repositories of fanworks, and for facilitating data centred research.

Rowan Smith discusses fan information seeking, focusing on how fans search for fanfiction and develop searching skills through the use and development of fan terminologies, and what that means for standard library catalogues. Zoltan Kacsuk, Xiaoyan Yang, Saskia Dreßler, Federico Pianzola and Martin Roth report on anime fanfiction metadata on AO3, and how these data compare with those from the Japanese Visual Media Graph and the Graphs and Ontologies for Literary Evolution Models. Keeping with the theme of anime, we then follow with Billy Tringali and Vibu Logendran, who report on their 'Anime Studies Research Guide' project, by documenting the contents of anime studies research guides from 25 libraries, which include both official and fan media.

Finally, we again see the endurance of physical media within fandom, with Kimberly Kennedy's preliminary report on her survey into the practice of

fanbinding as a form of both preservation and media ownership, which speaks to a wider trend towards 'un-digitizing' fandom. No one wants to lose their collection of fanworks!

It was, as always, a pleasure to hear from dedicated fans, fan scholars, and information professionals. Our cohort is so valuable in its courteous and intelligent behaviour and in its clear understanding of the importance of fanworks within our society, and of documenting them. We thank everyone for contributing.

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