

Trendspotting: Once and Future Fandoms

Fans of the British sci-fi program, *Doctor Who*, call themselves Whovians. The passion for the series, which began in 1963, has spanned generations and generated a spin-off series called *Torchwood*, along with book tie-ins, toys, and games. They hold an annual convention, the Chicago Tardis, which brings together more than two thousand fans every Thanksgiving weekend.

Whovians are but just one example of the many fandoms you might find in your library and around your community. Fandoms at the most basic level are a group or community of people who share a passion for a certain thing, whether it be a celebrity, book, musician, TV show, movie, etc.

Other popular fandoms include Sheerios (Ed Sheeran fans), Bronies (My Little Pony fans), Thronies (Game of Thrones), and Sherlockians (Sherlock Holmes fans). There is even still a huge following for the 1990s boy band, New Kids on the Block, who refer to themselves as Blockheads. Whatever the interest, there just may be a fandom out there.

So what should the role of libraries be and why do we care? According to ALA's Center for the Future of Libraries, "as a tool for constructing community and identity, fandoms may help further libraries goals to be centers of community and engagement. Fandoms may also help libraries bring together diverse individuals around shared culture and/or engage individuals who had not previously participated in the library's services."

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CASE IN POINT: POTTERHEADS

One of the biggest fandoms reported by libraries is Harry Potter, which comes as no surprise. And it isn't just for the kiddos; muggles of all ages seems to love the *Harry Potter* universe.

The head of reference & reader services at the Plainfield Public Library District (PPLD), Michelle Roubal, maintains, "Harry and his friends appeal to all of us, young and old. We were all once students struggling with the same things in the real world that Harry confronts in the wizarding world—friendship and loyalties, loneliness and bullying, competition and choices."

In partnership with nearby libraries and the local community college, PPLD chose "celebrating twenty years of Harry Potter" as the theme of their community read. The opening event featured Harry Potter trivia and costume contests. Then, for the month of February, patrons were encouraged to attend one or more of many programs offered, or to read a Harry Potter book or read-alike to be entered in prize drawings. The final event culminated in a magic show and contest of artwork in any medium inspired by Harry Potter. According to Roubal, "I've been involved with community read programs for over a decade, and this twentieth anniversary Harry Potter celebration was by far the most successful one yet, due to the incredible continued popularity with Potter fans."

Students at the Columbia College Chicago Library expressed great interest in Potterdom during trivia nights supported by the Muggles Association of Columbia. A hunt for the sorcerer's stone highlighted riddles and quests featured in the book, but also promoted other library resources.

The interest in Harry Potter doesn't seem like it will wane anytime soon. With new movies and books in the works, libraries can bet on a continued interest.

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FANDOM 101 FOR STAFF

Sometimes fandoms have languages all their own. Would “Team Jacob” or “Team Edward” mean anything to you if you never got into the *Twilight* craze? So how exactly do library staff integrate themselves in fandoms?

Libraries admit that most staff have a passion for some fandom, so make sure to tap into that knowledge from your coworkers, from pages to your library director. It’s simply human nature to have passions! Lauren Chambers, adult & teen services librarian at the Urbana Free Library, created a “guess the fandom” display for their comic con and reached out to staff for objects across fifty different fandoms. She was pleased with the response, receiving a variety of items from *Game of Thrones* to *Sherlock*, *My Little Pony* to *Guardians of the Galaxy*.

“Yes, my coworkers are crazy nerdy,” says Melinda Mathis, teen librarian at Napa County Library (CA). Personally, she is interested in *Supernatural* and *Doctor Who* and can name several coworkers with these same interests. The staff also contend that they love all comic books, minions, and even wrestling.

Columbia College Chicago’s (CCC) focus on art means many students and staff alike are well versed in media and art forms, even more so than the general public. Joy Thornton, access services assistant, tells about a Cinema Arts and Science major and staff member who “can tell you any and everything about any movie that has ever been made...either because he’s a robot or because he’s been studying his craft since he was a kid.”

SAFE SPOTS & FUTURE FANDOMS

Columbia’s Thornton feels the programming they offer for fandoms “transforms the library into a social place where you can meet people who have common interests. It’s also bringing people in who would never have otherwise walked into the library.” For some, the library may be the one safe place to express some less-than-conventional interests: “In the CCC Library, we love strange,” says Thornton.

At Evergreen Park Library, teen assistant Mary Black mirrors what is happening at Columbia College Library. “I had a group of teens whom I’d never met before come in on their day off from school and use the teen room to play *Dungeons and Dragons*. It was incredible to listen to them explain their game.” With school being out for the summer, she has invited them to use the library’s teen space as their summer hangout.

Tracie Amirante Padal, librarian at Palatine Public Library District, believes, “When a library hosts an event that supports and validates a fan’s passion, and those fans leave the program with a positive feeling about the library—that’s priceless. And that’s the whole point: it’s the thing that drives everything we do.”

Fandoms will always change and morph into something new as they follow trends and fads, but this urge to be with like-minded fans is here to stay and hopefully libraries will continue to be a hotspot for these passionate groups. For your library’s fans of these popular titles, be on the lookout this fall for another Robert Langdon thriller from Dan Brown, reboots of *Roseanne* and *Will & Grace*, the return of *Stranger Things* in October, Marvel’s *Thor: Ragnarok*, and *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* in December. **ILA**

Top Fandoms of 2016

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| ★ 5 Seconds of Summer (Top Music - Band) | ★ Kylie Jenner (Top Reality Star) |
| ★ Ali Krieger (Top Athlete) | ★ <i>Steven Universe</i> (Top TV Show - Animated) |
| ★ <i>Captain America: Civil War</i> (Top Movie) | ★ <i>Supernatural</i> (Top TV Show - Live Action) |
| ★ Chocolate (Top Food) | ★ Taylor Swift (Top Music - Solo Artist) |
| ★ The <i>Harry Potter</i> series (Top Book) | ★ Undertale (Top Video Game) |

Source: Tumblr Fandometrics, <https://thefandometrics.tumblr.com/tagged/tumblr2016>