

Vegas Science Fiction Association (VSFA)

The VSFA Valley Voyager (V3)

Vol 1. No. 2

July 2005



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Physicists Ponder Time Travel: Could It Happen In This Century?

By DICK PELLETIER

If we could jump into a time machine and meet ourselves at an earlier age, or go forward and see how we look in the future – wow. It's these possibilities that make time travel so enticing.

When Einstein created his theory of relativity, he laid the foundation for time travel. His calculations determined that time would slow for objects traveling at near light speed. This led many scientists to believe that faster than light speeds could someday allow time travel.

But isn't light-speed considered the speed limit of the universe? Scientists say yes, but there are ways around this barrier which can be found in black holes, wormholes and cosmic strings.

Black holes form when huge stars collapse into themselves creating gravitational forces equal to faster than light speeds, which conceivably could become a time portal. Wormholes exist throughout space in the form of tiny tunnels that connect now with future and past times, and are considered to have the most potential for time travel. And cosmic strings which line the entire length of the universe generate enormous gravity pull that could someday warp a spaceship through time.

Michio Kaku, Richard Gott, Neil Johnson, Edward Witten, and many other physicists have proposed a variety of ways to build backward and forward time machines. Cal-Tech's Kip Thorne was the first to publish a scientific paper with the words "time machine" in the title. Thorne worried that reporters might ballyhoo the article causing colleagues to ignore it – but instead, his work brought other scientists out in the open.

World famous physicist Stephen Hawking once opposed the idea of time travel, but has since changed his mind, and now believes time travel is possible.

Now what about the so-called paradox? Say we travel back in time and prevent our parents from getting together. This would prevent us from being born; we would not exist, and our journey in time couldn't happen.

Theoreticians offer two probabilities. The past is already defined and can't be changed – something will always prevent time travelers from changing the past. Or, changing the past immediately creates a parallel universe where our parents were never together – our original universe still remains. Hawking explains the origin of our universe in a variation of this parallel-worlds theme.

Forward-thinkers believe that as early as 2050 to 2100, massive discoveries could appear enabling us to harness the vast resources in our galaxy required to power time travel.

Advantages to time travel are mind-boggling. Traveling forward to glimpse the future will satisfy our curiosity, of course. What bold discoveries might exist in the 22nd century and beyond? Will our species "morph" into a non-biological entity?

And visiting the past could allow us to gather scanned minds from lost loved ones before their death, allowing them to continue their lives in our present time. Could this fantastic time travel future happen? Bold futurists say it can.

So...if a stranger appears one day claiming to be your great-great granddaughter from the future, don't slam the door. She just might represent your ticket to an amazing life in a world full of miracles – a truly "magical future".

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Using Science Fiction To Help Turn Kids on to Reading...

And the Future! Part II

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I can't offer a tutorial on high-quality SF in this short space. So let's present the next best thing: a short list of ways to help teachers, librarians and others bridge the gap between simpleminded sci-fi images that are so popular in movies these days, and real literary Science Fiction where ideas flow and readers engage in truly exploratory adventures of the mind.

1. Using Web-based sites to create useful curriculum aids.

A new effort has begun, and it is aimed at creating online resources for teachers wanting to bring good science fiction into their classrooms as a way to excite topic-specific interest among students.

Author Julie H. Czerneda's book, *No Limits: Developing Scientific Literacy Using Science Fiction*, was specifically designed to help teachers combine great stories with science curricula. She has since developed this program much farther, with added titles. See:

<http://www.trifoliumbooks.com/>

A number of teachers have already used classic SF stories and novels to illustrate topics that are already in a teacher's official study program. A teacher in Barstow, California, created a good example, using my novel, *The Postman* (<http://postman.cosmic.org>) to elicit class discussions on issues in both literature and civics. Other teachers use stories to illustrate points in physics, chemistry, history, etc. When their materials—study guides and question sets—are distributed on the Web, they become a permanent help to teachers everywhere. To encourage this new kind of shared teaching resources, I sponsored a contest in conjunction with *Analog Magazine*. (See: <http://www.analogsf.com/wow>.) Alas, the contest is now in hiatus. But it may be renewed at a later date. But there remains a valuable resource page. Here are just a few examples of items listed on that resource page.

Also see: Lesson plans relating to SF: http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~brians/guides_index.html

And this is just the beginning. It is hoped that a whole series of curriculum-related materials will become available, coordinated through the University of Kansas, the Science Fiction Writers of America, and the Science Fiction Museum.

2. Creating new and better books for kids to read.

Consider this quandary. Science fiction images and adventures are more popular than ever, especially with young people. Yet very little high quality science fiction is aimed straight for the vast market of adventure-minded teens. There is a market! Witness the success of Star Wars novelizations. Still, these factory-made series are missing something. Their exploits often follow the same hackneyed plot style. While the brightest teens soon graduate to reading more challenging books for grownups, many are discouraged by a scarcity of good, intelligent tales written just for them.

My own effort has been to create a new kind of series that takes young protagonists from here and now out of their comfortable world in 2005, throwing them into exhilarating quests across space and time, sent on dangerous missions in order to save the future. Avon Books published the first three volumes of the **David Brin's Out of Time** series in 2000, featuring wholly original science fiction adventure novels, each one by a respected author of proved ability and vision—Nebula Award winners Nancy Kress, Roger MacBride Allen, and Sheila Finch, hopefully paving the way for more to follow.

3. Creating grass roots activism.

Finally, there is the issue of what today's science fiction fan community might do to help. Fans are a special breed—millions strong—who maintain a belief that the future is a place that can be explored with brave adventures of the mind, adventures that may even help us avoid errors, the way George Orwell, Aldous Huxley and others gave warnings that helped divert us from dangerous paths.



July VSFA Social by Carol Kern

So. I found myself at my first VSFA Social. Why, oh why? Because I'm a good friend.

I must back up a bit and explain that I am not a social animal. I work in the convention industry. I'm used to spending 12-16 hours a day around hoards of people with whom I have to be professionally pleasant. The most frustrating kind of people: conventioners and tourists. So I value my "alone time." I've also been told, by my loving parents and best friend, that I am not a patient person. Until recently, I've only practiced lurking on the VSFA listserv rather than participate in any of the activities.

But, as I said, I am a good friend. So, when I found out that Woody Bernardi wouldn't be back for the Sunday Social (in fact, never back for a meeting again), that Rebecca would be stepping up to temporary presidency, that Kent accepted the last minute challenge to come up with a "program," I decided to suck it up and be sociable for a couple of hours to show my support for the group and my friends.

Ok, so the room was hot due to an air conditioning delay, but the food was pretty good and the service was excellent. The attendees were mainly people I'd met before. Arnie and Joyce I've known for some time from the old days of SNAFFU. I've met most of the others – Teresa Cochran, Joelle Barnes, Merric and Lubov Anderson, James Taylor, and Joshua Andrews (please forgive me if I've left anyone out) before at movie days and the VSFA July 4th party. I got to meet Linda and Ron Bushyager for the first time, and they are an unforgettable couple. I'm sure we'll have many interesting discussions in the future. Thank you Linda for coming in and adjusting the A/C. What would we have done without you?



TREE FUNGUS!

I got my first good look at Rebecca's show and tell item. An item her brother brought back from Hawaii – tree fungus! Some creative soul had the idea of carving this gnarly hunk of fungus into a critter from a wild imagination! Reactions seemed to range from "Oh, cool" to "Ewww". (I was in the "cool" category.)

Kent arrived after a delay. He set up his electronics and emptied what must have been a bag of holding considering the prodigious number of books and pamphlets he pulled out. Kent's interpretation of the published topic was to introduce the group to Libertarian reading material and play selected sound clips from, I think I have this right, a wake for a prominent member of the Libertarian community. He put a lot of effort into his presentation.

I know he didn't get a huge amount of notice to pull it together and, hey, he's got a life and everything too, you know! But, boy was he playing to the wrong crowd. We were all getting hot and cranky. And this was not what we were expecting. I was being very good (you'd have been proud if you knew me

enough to know my level of restraint) and quietly tried to listen without staring at James' watch too much. The far end of the table began to raise a bit of a ruckus as the sound clips went on (and on). Finally, I did what I do best and rudely interrupted Kent to explain that he was losing his audience. After a last minute attempt by Joyce to bring us to the topic we were expecting, we all decided that what we really wanted to talk about was Woody's departure and what it would mean to the group.

Now that got the blood flowing. We had some brisk discussion going on! In the end, though, there were no answers beyond the desire and the will of the entire group to continue as we have been. Rebecca Hardin re-iterated that she was temporarily taking over the presidential duties until a more permanent solution had been reached and that the remaining Board was prepared to handle things. It was way too soon to expect anything more and this was not the time or place to try and resolve anything further.

From my point of view the pre and post-meeting discussions were the real attraction to the social. I'm sure it's good to have some discussion topics for less dynamic crowds who need help conversing, but I enjoyed the interaction with the group far more than any lecture. While that may contradict my earlier anti-social statements, I have to point out that I am also notorious for playing devil's advocate.



Joshua Andrews, James Taylor, and Theresa Cochran

FANS and GEEKS and FOOD, OH MY! - by Ruth R. Davidson

Joshua Andrew's Birthday BBQ was the first fannish event I attended after nearly 3 months of inactivity (life drama and all that). It was a BLAST! Joshua made fantastic food, beer battered (though he insists it was brewed, heehee) bratwurst (I didn't have any since I don't consume alcohol), hot dogs (which he started earlier than planned for my daughter Hazel), and burgers, along with side dishes like chips and dip, corn on the cob (I went crazy on those), potato salad and all sorts of goodies. Lets not forget the cake. Mmmm.

The company was the best part though. Not only did I get to see Joshua, but I got to reacquaint myself with Rebecca Hardin and Stacy. I also met Rebecca's Mom, whose name now eludes me (which is ironic since we had a tongue and cheek conversation about how she has no name), I simply remembered her as Grandma VSFA! Which is currently the best Las Vegas fannish nickname ever, in my opinion. ::cute face::

I also got to meet some of Joshua's friends from K'Ehleyr Station, many of whom were pretty spiffy (this is good because before the BBQ I had told Joshua that I would join K'Ehleyr). I especially liked Charis, but then again, anyone who likes my baby is someone worth liking! ::laughs::

I was pleased that Hazel also had lots of fun and was well received. After getting over the "I'm in a strange place so I'll pretend I'm asleep" attitude, she became quite sociable, but was pretty well behaved the whole time. (Keep an eye on her, as she is the Doom Baby of Death and is plotting world domination. Her cuteness is there to distract us from her cunning plan. I only hope she achieves her objectives AFTER she discovers that "mama was right all along". Maybe then I won't be in the top five people she axes first.)

It must be said that, anyone who missed the BBQ, you may count yourself unlucky, as it was filled with great food, company, and conversation. How can you go wrong when you're in a room hanging out with fans and geeks, and partaking of Joshua's fabulous culinary BBQ skills?



Joelle Barnes, Bettye Hardin (aka: Grandma VSFA), Rebecca Hardin, Stacy Lawrence, Ruth R. Davidson, and Hazel

Letters

Robert Lichtman:

Thanks for sending this. The cover has a wonderfully retro look, reminding me of some fanzines from years ago but all tarted up for the new millennium. I don't have much in the way of comments except to wonder a little bit why, in your account of "Las Vegas' Fantasy & Science Fiction Day," you mentioned Walt Willis' brief pitstop in Las Vegas. He takes barely half a page for the entire visit, and the most entertaining part of it is his marvelous description of Forry Ackerman's salad. Also, it's Dwain Kaiser, not Dwaine. Please keep sending these. They're a nice adjunct to Arnie's relentlessly weekly VFW.

Best wishes,

Robert

Lloyd Penney:

Dear VSFAns,

Downloaded V3 #1 of the VSFA Valley Voyager, and many thanks for that. Joshua at least had a good idea, and I will support anything that resembles a clubzine these days. (Dare I make a quick correction, and say that your cover artist is Alan White, not Allen?--Oh, well, I dare.)

I hope that David Brin's article on getting kids to read and to look to the future isn't already dated. I see few children reading books of any kind, and there's so much emphasis on video games these days, are kids doing anything constructive?

I may be sounding like an oldphart here, but it is difficult to catch the imagination of modern kids, and I have my doubts about them having any imagination at all. Good to see that he believes that the right book or film can fire the imagination...I wonder what he thinks of Orson Scott Card's scathing denunciation of Star Trek?

The article on deciphering the entire human genome sounds very interesting, especially for the possibility of ridding humanity of weak genes, or genes that can bring on many diseases that seem to have to cure. This also brings about the idea of eugenics, the tailoring of human beings to be near-perfect. Is Homo sapiens bringing about its own successor? There are a number of Twilight Zone episodes from the 1980s version that stick in my mind, and Neil Schulman's "Profile in Silver" is one of them.

Lane Smith (who died recently) played the time traveling Prof. Fitzgerald, and Andrew Robinson (Garak from DS9) played an excellent John F. Kennedy.

Hey, a good start to this new zine. Let me know when the next one will be coming up, and I'll whip up a loc for that, too.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

Theresa Cochran:

Mindy, Woody, et al:

You guys did an awesome job. Thanks for arranging to put the David Brin article in this issue as well.

Teresa

David-Glenn Anderson:

Mindy and Woody

Good fanzine. When is issue 2 coming out? Would like to read rest of David Brin's article.

Joshua -- Happy belated birthday. I am swamped with Cascadia Educators Conference as September 1 nears. When is the next issue of V3 coming out?

David-Glenn Anderson

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