

[Note: Spellings and phrasings have been checked for exact correctness. For example, the 1929 NYC SF club is "The Scienceers", not "the Scienceers". The column in *Amazing Stories* that brought the first fans together was "Discussions", not "Letters". The theme of Loscon Fifteen was "South Gate in 'Eighty eight", not "Southgate in 88" (as the Program Book has printed it for years). Loscon the 13th and Loscon 17 did not have themes officially even though the 13th emphasized bad luck/superstition and 17 emphasized moving to a new location after seven years at the Pasadena Hilton. Several authors have been removed from the list of regular LASFS members who were successful SF authors, either because they were never LASFS members although they may have visited the LASFS a few times or been a panelist at a Loscon, or because they did not become successful authors until long after they dropped out of the club. Anyone tempted to make changes in this text (such as adding Robert Bloch as a LASFS member just because he is known to have lived in Los Angeles in the past) should make sure that the changes are correct.]

[Note: Check to make sure that the anniversary number in the first paragraph has been updated each year. In the tenth paragraph, about the Westercons, the last line about current Westercons also needs to be updated each year.]

[Note: It is a LASFS tradition that Forrest J Ackerman's name is deliberately spelled without a period after his middle initial.]

[Note: This history has been updated through November 2007 by Fred Patten.]

A Brief History of the LASFS

This year, as always, Loscon is brought to you by the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society. Celebrating its 73rd anniversary this October 27th, it is the world's oldest living science fiction club. However, the LASFS did not form spontaneously from a vacuum. It required the support of an organized science fiction fandom.

The pioneering science fiction magazine, *Amazing Stories*, began monthly publication in April 1926. It printed opinions and criticisms from its readers, along with their full addresses, in a "Discussions" column. Rejoicing in their newfound kindred, many early fans, most of high school and college age, began writing to each other. Within a few years, a group of two or three hundred of these pen pals around North America and Britain had formed a loose social association. Some organized more formally. A Science Correspondence Club was started during 1928, and began publishing a club magazine, *The Comet*, in May 1930. By the early 1930s several of the more literate fans, individually or in collaboration, started their own amateur magazines in emulation of the professional SF magazines. The prevailing attitude and sense of purpose of these early fans and fanzines was the serious advancement of science fiction.

The earliest localized SF club was The Scienceers in New York City, which first met on December 11, 1929. Its fanzine, *The Planet*, began in July 1930. In addition to amateur fiction and popular science articles, it reported on the meetings and social activities of the club. Copies of *The Planet* were mailed throughout the fledgling SF fandom, and encouraged many fans to start similar clubs in their cities. These clubs usually drifted apart after a few months or years as their adolescent members developed other interests, but there were always some SF clubs to inspire new fans to create or join local clubs.

In May 1934, *Wonder Stories* announced the creation of the Science Fiction League, an international SF club which was to be coordinated through a column in the magazine. Members living in the same city were encouraged to get together and start a local SFL chapter. The first SFL chapters were on the East Coast, but on Saturday, October 27, 1934, seven Los Angeles SFL members and two guests met in the garage of member E. C. Reynolds. These nine fans sent a letter to *Wonder Stories* asking to become an SFL chapter. The Los Angeles Science Fiction League (LASFL) was granted a charter dated November 13, 1934 as the club's fourth chapter.

The LASFL met irregularly during its first year. This changed when Forrest J Ackerman, a hyper-enthusiastic L.A. fan who was in college in San Francisco at the time, returned home at the beginning of 1936 and quickly became the club's most active member. Bolstered by Forry's efforts, LASFL began meeting regularly every other Thursday in February 1936, increasing to the first four Thursdays of the month in January 1939 and every Thursday in July 1942. He became the nucleus of a group of similarly enthusiastic young fans such as Walter Daugherty, T. Bruce Yerke, Paul Freehafer, Ray Bradbury, and Ray Harryhausen who transformed the LASFL from a tiny literary discussion club into a lively social group. They invited all SF authors visiting or living in Los Angeles to come to the LASFL. Arthur J. Burks, Robert A. Heinlein, Jack Williamson, Henry Kuttner, and other celebrities accepted the invitation.

Ackerman was particularly active in helping the LASFL publish its own mimeographed fanzines. They were full of humorous, pun-filled reviews and parodies of current SF, as well as discussions of the LASFL's picnics, holiday parties and group outings to scientific lectures at Cal Tech or the local planetarium in addition to the club meetings. These soon established the LASFL's reputation throughout budding SF fandom as "Shangri-L.A."; a paradise for young SF fans. This reputation helped L.A. fandom win the World Science Fiction Convention for 1942 (postponed until 1946 due to World War II).

When the parent Science Fiction League began to fall apart in the late 1930s, Forry aided the club in staying alive by declaring its independence on March 27, 1940 as the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society. Forry remained active in the club for the next two decades. He seldom held a formal club office, but he was always there to keep things moving while others came and went. Forrest Ackerman was Mr. LASFS for thirty years. By the time he stopped participating regularly in the mid-1960s, he left a firmly established club behind him.

The LASFS went through some drastic personality changes before settling down into its current self. SF fandom in the Thirties was dominated by intellectual young men who gave the original LASFL the atmosphere of a college fraternity. During the early Forties, the club almost self-destructed due to fannish politics. Cliques and factions battled, attempting to impeach club officers, arguing endlessly over trivial differences of opinion, and setting up rival local SF clubs. At the same time, with World War II in progress and most SF fans over 18 in the Armed Services, the LASFS took on the atmosphere of a fannish USO. Los Angeles was a major embarkation center for soldiers and sailors shipping out into the Pacific, and LASFS members were always ready to stop fighting long enough to greet and play host to fans in uniform passing through L.A. to the front.

Perhaps in reaction, as soon as the war ended the club swung to the opposite extreme, shunning most fannish activities as irresponsible. The attitude was encouraged that fans should aspire to become professional SF authors, and several local writers including A. E. van Vogt, Ross Rocklynne and L. Ron Hubbard became regular participants. The LASFS instituted a "Fanquet", an annual banquet honoring those members who made their first professional SF sale. Several members did sell one or two short stories, and one, E. Everett Evans (for whom the Evans-Freehafer Award is co-named, with Paul Freehafer; see separate section), became a minor popular author during the 1950s until his death in 1958.

A major accomplishment of the LASFS in the late 1940s was the creation of the annual West Coast Science Fantasy Conference (Westercon). At this time the only SF conventions were in the New York/Pennsylvania/New Jersey area, plus the annual World Science Fiction Convention which had come to Los Angeles in 1946 but was usually held in a city East of the Mississippi. Two LASFS members, Walter Daugherty and Dave Fox, felt that the fans in Western cities deserved their own annual convention. In 1948 the LASFS started the Westercon in emulation of the Worldcon. Los Angeles-area fans held the first three Westercons until the convention was well-enough established that fan clubs in such cities as San Diego and San Francisco were ready to host it. Today the Westercon is sixty years old, and has met in cities ranging from Vancouver, BC to Honolulu, HI to Boise, ID to El Paso, TX. The Westercon's Bylaws specify the LASFS as the archive of Westercon business and the default administrator in the case of the failure of any individual Westercon (which has never happened). Westercon 55 in 2002 returned to Los Angeles for the first time in eight years. The 2005 Westercon was in Calgary, 2006 was in San Diego, 2007 was in San Mateo, 2008 was in Las Vegas, and Westercon 62 in 2009 will be in Tempe.

By the early 1960s the LASFS had worked through its extremes to become the casual, open-to-all interests club that it is today. There are always some SF authors and artists in residence, from Fritz Leiber in the late Fifties to Larry Niven, Jerry Pournelle and John DeChancie today, including Alan Dean Foster, Stephen Goldin, David Gerrold, Steven Barnes, John Dalmás, William Rotsler, and George Barr among others. Some were well-established when they moved to Los Angeles and others became authors while they were fans in the club. But there is no longer pressure for members to write if they prefer to remain fans.

In the Sixties the LASFS regained the lively spirit of its beginnings, with the additional benefit of a growing female presence in SF fandom. The club became more family oriented, with several marriages between members during the Sixties and Seventies including Bjo & John Trimble, Len & June Moffatt, and Bruce & Elayne Pelz. Fans began to specialize into sub-groups, devoting themselves to hard-science SF, Tolkienish high fantasy, SF movies, comic books, specific movie and TV series including *Star Trek* and *Dr. Who*, roleplaying games, mystery/detective fiction, computer groups, even cliffhanger serials and old Westerns through the efforts of Charles Lee Jackson II. The Cartoon/Fantasy Organization, the first Japanese anime fan club, held its first meeting at the LASFS in May 1977. Despite this fragmentation, the LASFS counted them all as part of All Things Fannish, encouraging a strong spirit of camaraderie and family. The LASFS began to build this spirit

during the 1960s, incorporating in 1968 as a non-profit educational organization and buying its own property in 1973. In 1977 the LASFS replaced it with a larger clubhouse at the current location in North Hollywood. The club acquired its first computer, an Altair, that year as a donation by Larry & Fuzzy (Marilyn) Niven; it was made a member as Altair Niven. In 1993 the club completed renovations to its front building, remodeling and doubling the size of its SF library which now contains well over 10,000 volumes. The LASFS went online with its own website in 1997.

In December 1975 the Society prepared LA 2000, a special convention to celebrate the club's 2,000th meeting. More a relaxicon than a convention in the traditional sense (such as featuring guests of honor or holding a formal program), the event was so enjoyable that it was repeated in 1976, moving to October to honor the club's anniversary and calling itself Loscon for the first time. The Loscon was held twice in 1977, the second that year being the first with an official guest of honor, Jerry Pournelle. By 1978 it had settled into an annual November affair, the Los Angeles Regional Science Fiction and Fantasy Convention, and starting with Loscon 9 in 1982 the Thanksgiving weekend has become traditional. Loscon 7 in 1980 was the first to top 1,000 members, and attendance has not dropped below a thousand since 1984. The Loscon was held in Pasadena from 1983 through 1989, in Burbank from 1993 through 2003, and in 2004 it returned to Los Angeles itself.

In the last quarter of the 20th century the LASFS began to blend and expand its social and literary activities. The annual Fanquet metamorphed through a LASFS Showcase into the LaLaCon beginning in 1995; a two-day "Spring Fling relaxicon, social gathering and open house" held at Freehafer Hall. Attendance is limited to 150; the venue's maximum capacity. Traditional LaLaCon events include a Plutonium Chili Cookoff on Saturday at noon; an Intergalactic Ice Cream Social on Saturday evening; and a Banquet on Sunday. In 1964 the LASFS began *APA-L*, an unofficial weekly fanzine assembled at each club meeting consisting of individual contributions by members who find it convenient to communicate through "paper conversations" of usually two to four pages; some contributing by mail who cannot attend the club's meetings. *APA-L* has had contributors from throughout North America and Europe. In 1976 the similar monthly *LASFAPA* was started. During 2006 *APA-L* has averaged about thirty pages from fifteen contributors per week. Several of the unofficial sub-groups have grown into technically independent clubs which traditionally meet at Freehafer Hall on an established weekend each month, including the Cartoon/Fantasy Organization and Cinema Anime (anime clubs), the Time Meddlers (*Dr. Who*), and TRIPE, FWEMS and the Estrogen Zone (movie-watching clubs). Members of these clubs are also the organizers of the annual Los Angeles-area Gallifrey One (*Dr. Who*) convention, and the new Animé L.A. convention beginning in 2005.

For legal reasons, LASFS members incorporated a separate California non-profit organization in 1982, the Southern California Institute for Fan Interests, Inc. (SCIFI), to be the sponsor and organizer of Worldcons, Westercons, and similar major events within the science-fiction community that are not a part of the LASFS. SCIFI organized the 1984, 1996, and recent 2006 Los Angeles Worldcons, the 1999 North American Science Fiction Convention (NASFiC) and the 1989, 1994 and 2002 Westercons. In 1997 SCIFI created the Fan Gallery, a growing gallery of portrait photographs of prominent SF authors and fans funded from the "Benefit to Fandom" money left over from the 1996 Worldcon surplus. The Fan Gallery was first exhibited at Loscon in 1997 and has become a regular display at Worldcons, Loscons and other conventions since then.

The LASFS has survived some traumatic shocks. The April 1992 Los Angeles Riots occurred on a Thursday, which almost caused the club to cancel its weekly meeting for the first time since the early 1940s. (That meeting was attended by only a few fans who adjourned early to get home before the martial-law curfew.) After the January 1994 6.7 Richter Northridge Earthquake, and again during the October-November 2003 Southern California wildfires, the LASFS became an information center for fans to keep in touch with each other and offer help. A smaller tragedy has become common due to the "graying" of fandom; LASFS regular attendees for decades have started dying or becoming confined to their homes due to the infirmities of old age. In March 2002 Bruce Pelz proposed the establishment of a status known as 'Pillar of the LASFS.' In order to qualify as a Pillar, the member must be dead. The member's estate, or friends, would then make a large, lump-sum donation to the LASFS, in an amount to be determined by the club. The proposal was being discussed when Pelz unexpectedly died in May of a pulmonary embolism. The creation of the Pillar of the LASFS Award was approved in June with the donation set at \$4,000, and donations to make Pelz himself the first Pillar of the LASFS were raised within two months at the 2002 Westercon and Worldcon.

Fortunately, the LASFS is constantly adding young and enthusiastic SF fans to replace the departed. Some major LASFS events during 2004 included the club's 70th anniversary meeting and the 40th anniversary distribution of *APA-L* (#2058), both in October. The participants of both ranged from their founders to newcomers who only joined during 2004. The 2006 Worldcon, L.A.con IV, was held in Los Angeles (Anaheim), and many newcomers discovered the club through that Worldcon.

LASFS's regular Thursday night meetings, starting around 7:00 p.m., usually boast sixty to one hundred fans of all ages. About half the attendees participate in the formal meeting and program, which may include a speaker, an SF movie, a panel, or auctions of SF items. The rest are present to use the club's library (a trove of SF books, magazines, audio and video tapes, available to all members), or to gather in informal groups in various spots around the clubhouse to socialize, pursue their special interests, or work on individual club projects. (The LASFS has organized SF exhibits for local public and university libraries, and a committee has been publishing an annually updated "LASFS Recommended Reading List for Young Readers" since 1997, which has been requested by librarians across the country. The LASFS maintains social contact with other major SF clubs throughout America.) The clubhouse is also open every Friday night for more informal socializing and open gaming. In addition, on the Second Sunday of each month the LASFS hosts an open house for gaming fans. The LASFS ran a SF exhibition booth at the annual UCLA Book Fair for many years, and it still holds its annual "LaLaCon" two-day relaxicon each Spring.

There is something for every SF enthusiast at the LASFS! For more information call us on Thursday nights (or leave a message) at (818) 760-9234; or stop by the clubhouse at 11513 Burbank Boulevard, North Hollywood on Thursday or Friday evenings. Or check out the LASFS' website: <http://www.lasfs.org/lasfs/>

**[Suggested details not yet determined:
none**

A Brief History of Loscon

The following is a guide to the history of the Los Angeles Regional Science Fiction and Fantasy Convention (Loscon). The numbers in parentheses indicate total members followed by actual attending members. Convention themes are also named for those conventions that had themes.

LA 2000
December 5 - 7, 1975
International Hotel, Los Angeles
GoH: None
Chair: Milt Stevens
(199 / 196)

Loscon 2
October 15 - 17, 1976
Pacifica Hotel, Culver City
GoH: None
Chair: Ron Bounds
(?? / 175)

Loscon 3
April 1 - 3, 1977
Quality Inn Airport, Los Angeles
GoH: None
Chairs: Ed Finkelstein & Mike Glyer
(163 / 149)

Loscon 4
November 4 - 6, 1977
Quality Inn Airport, Los Angeles
GoH: Jerry Pournelle
Chair: Marty Massoglia
(279 / 253)

Loscon 5
November 3 - 5, 1978
Huntington Sheraton, Pasadena
GoH: Robert Bloch