

Press Release #19

SPECULATIVE LITERATURE FOUNDATION: 2007 ANNUAL REPORT

SPECULATIVE LITERATURE FOUNDATION PO Box 1693, Dubuque, IA 52004-1693

info@speculativeliterature.org - <http://www.speculativeliterature.org/>

For Immediate Release: December 5, 2007

Speculative Literature Foundation: 2007 Annual Report

You may be wondering why you're seeing a copy of the SLF annual report. You may (or may not) even know what the SLF is. Even if you are familiar with us and our work, you probably don't know why we'd send out our annual report like this, publically, to a variety of science fiction and fantasy venues. Which is exactly why we're sending it out -- because we were created to be a resource for readers, writers, editors and publishers in the field, and our programs, awards, and grants are far less effective if no one knows who we are. So let us tell you a little bit about what we've done this year, and what we'll be doing in the future.

Why Do We Need the SLF?

The SLF was founded in 2004, by Mary Anne Mohanraj (founder and past editor-in-chief of Strange Horizons) and a coterie of volunteers, to provide a literary arts organization for the field. We did this for a few reasons:

- genre writers tend not to apply for (or even be aware of) many of the opportunities for awards and grants in the rest of the literary field
- we wanted to provide an entry point for grant applications, training authors so that they would feel more comfortable applying for general literary grants (such as the NEA grants, which award \$20,000 annually to a host of recipients, or the Illinois Arts Council grant (which I received), which awards \$7000)
- we wanted to provide grants and awards specifically for excellent spec fic, to encourage superior work in the field, because sadly, it's undoubtedly true that some mainstream literary venues are not so open to genre fiction

We believe that while the marketplace can be an effective way to find exciting literature, there are of necessity certain financial constraints that operate within it; a good non-profit arts organization can help to offset that problem, fostering a richer variety of wonderful stories and helping develop talented storytellers.

Our mission: to promote literary quality in speculative fiction by encouraging promising new writers, assisting established writers, facilitating the work of quality magazines and small presses in the genre, and developing a greater public appreciation of speculative fiction.

What is Speculative Fiction?

We're using spec fic as a catch-all term to cover everything from hard sf to epic fantasy to ghost stories to slipstream to cyberpunk to steampunk to urban fantasy to folk and fairy tales -- essentially, anything that isn't strictly realistic falls under our umbrella. It's a big umbrella.

SLF Programs

Our programs fall into a variety of categories:

Grants: We currently offer two grants, the Gulliver Travel Research Grant (one \$600 grant given annually), and the Older Writers' Grant (two \$500 grants given annually). We've offered these since 2004, and for more information on applying for these grants, past recipients, and more, just visit our site. So far, we haven't needed to charge application fees (thanks to the generosity of our donors), and we hope that continues in the future, so all you need to do to have a chance at these grants (if eligible) is spend a few minutes reading our site -- and then apply! We hope to offer more grants soon, and the next few grants we're hoping to develop are a Young Writers' Grant, geared towards promising high school students, and a Best of the Small Presses Grant.

Awards: In the past, we offered one award, the \$1000 Fountain Award for excellence in short fiction. The three past award recipients are listed on our site, and you can read much more about them and their wonderful work there. Currently, we are not offering any awards, in order to focus our efforts on expanding our grant opportunities.

Mentorship Program: In the mentorship program, we pair new writers with new pros for three months, setting up mailing lists and sending out questions so that those a step or two up the publication ladder can reach out a hand to help those just starting out. We're

hoping to expand the program in the future, so that more experienced pros can help new pros, and so forth. Once you know how to do something, it's tremendously satisfying to teach it to someone else; we aim to help writers pass their knowledge along. Recent mentors have included: John Scalzi, Ben Rosenbaum, Nnedi Okorafor-Mbachu, Jay Lake, David Moles, Sarah Prineas, and several more. Each mentor has worked with three to five aspiring writers.

Small Press Co-operative: The co-op is primarily a mailing list at this point, where members can exchange advice and information. We also facilitate shared table space at conventions, so that even if your press only publishes one chapbook, you can afford to be present in the dealers' room, getting your work out to the world. We'd love to do more with the co-op, so if you're a small press publisher, editor, etc., bring your ideas and come join!

Other Programs: There's a lot more we do, but if I told you all of it, you'd never get to the end of this letter. So please, come take a look at our site and explore. Need a syllabus to teach your college SF writing class? Or maybe a list of MFA programs that accept genre writing? Looking for a publisher for your chapbook? If the info's not on our site, it will be!

Current SLF Status

The SLF was on a bit of a hiatus in 2007, which much less presence than usual at conventions and the like, primarily because its director (me) was on maternity leave. But we managed to keep our grants programs going and our resource website updated, thanks to our wonderful volunteers. My new daughter is now six months old, and I'm starting to sleep again, so you should expect to see a lot more of the SLF both online and at conventions. We'll definitely have a table at WisCon next year, and probably WindyCon and World Fantasy as well. More, if more people volunteer to help us host at their local conventions. And of course, most of what we do, we do online, so you can participate from anywhere in the world. If you love science fiction and/or fantasy, and are interested in volunteering with the SLF, please do drop me a line, and we can talk about where we might be able to use you!

Request for Money

You knew this was coming, didn't you? You've been wondering -- But Mary Anne, where do you get the money for all these great programs? And the answer is, we get it from you. From generous donations that come in from readers and writers and editors and publishers -- from the people we hope to serve. Some people donate \$5. Some sign up for an annual membership at \$30/yr. Some

give more -- the Gulliver Travel Grant, for example, is entirely funded by a single anonymous donor who sends in \$600 every year, just so a talented writer has the opportunity to do travel research to make their next book or short story or poem better.

Whatever you can afford, we would love to have -- we promise to use it wisely. And since we're a non-profit, your donation is tax-deductible. Even better, all of our staff are volunteers, so you know that all of the money donated goes directly to supporting our programs.

How to Donate

You can donate in a variety of ways. Most simply, if you have a credit card, you can visit our website and use PayPal to donate. You can sign up for a membership there: <http://www.speclit.org/About/membership.php>

You can also specify which program you'd like to support, or just donate to our general operating funds: <http://www.speclit.org/About/donations.php>.

Or, if you prefer, you can send a check to our treasurer (who lives in Iowa):

Speculative Literature Foundation
P.O. Box 1693
Dubuque, IA 52004-1693

Our tax ID # is 20-0587225; that's what you'll write on the form if you claim your donation on taxes next spring. Do feel free to specify what your check goes to fund, if you have a preference.

However (and however much) you choose to donate, please accept our thanks. With your help, we can help speculative fiction flourish, providing compelling reading for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Mary Anne Mohanraj
Executive Director, SLF
www.speclit.org