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SERIOUS LEISURE IN THE DIGITAL WORLD: EXPLORING THE INFORMATION BEHAVIOUR OF FAN COMMUNITIES

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ..... **XI**

GLOSSARY ..... **XII**

1. PART ONE: INTRODUCTION **1**

1.1. PERSONAL STATEMENT 1
1.2. CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE 3
1.3. RESEARCH CONTEXT 4
1.4. AIM & OBJECTIVES 8
1.5. LIMITATIONS & SCOPE OF THESIS 10
1.6. RATIONALE 11
1.7. IMPACT 16
1.7.1. Copyright 17
1.7.2. Publishing 19
1.7.3. Media industry 20
1.7.4. Education 22
1.7.5. Library and information professions 24
1.7.6. Summary 26

2. PART TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW **28**

2.1. DEFINITIONS 28
2.1.1. Defining fans 28
2.1.1.1. Historical attempts to define fans 29
2.1.1.2. Defining fans in the 21st century 32
2.1.1.3. Summary 36
2.1.2. Defining fan communities 37
2.1.2.1. Online communities 39
2.1.2.2. Online vs. virtual 42
2.1.2.3. Genre and discourse communities 43
2.1.2.4. Fan communities 49
2.1.2.5. Summary 52
2.2. HISTORY AND CONTEXT 53
2.2.1. A brief history of fandom 53
2.2.2 The history of fan studies 60
2.2.2.1. Early works on audiences 60
2.2.2.2. The birth of fan studies 65
2.2.2.3. Fan studies in the age of the internet 70
2.2.3 Literature analysis 75
2.2.3.1. Fan information behaviour in fan studies 76
2.2.3.2. Fan information behaviour in LIS 78
2.2.3.3. Summary 90
2.3. THE INFORMATION BEHAVIOUR OF FANS 92
2.3.1. Relevant models of information behaviour 94
2.3.1.1. LIS models 95
2.3.1.1.1 Wilson's model of information behaviour (Wilson 1981; 1996) 95
2.3.1.1.2 Everyday Life Information Seeking (ELIS) (Savolainen 1995) 97
2.3.1.1.3. Hektor's information activities model (Hektor 2001) 99
2.3.1.1.4. Information grounds (Fisher 2005) 101
2.3.1.1.5. The Information Journey (Blandford and Attfield 2010) 101
2.3.1.1.6. Information-seeking and communication model (ISCM) (Robson and Robinson 2013) 103
2.3.1.2. Non-LIS models 104
2.3.1.2.1. The Serious Leisure Perspective (Stebbins 2001) 104
2.3.1.2.2. The ecology of online Sims communities (Curlew 2004) 106
2.3.1.2.3. "A Worker's Inquiry 2.0" (Brown and Quan-Haase 2012) 107
2.3.2. Summary 109

2.4. Conclusions 114

3. PART THREE – METHODOLOGY 121

3.1. Research approach 121
3.1.1. Methodology in fan studies 123
3.1.1.1. Methodological issues in fan studies 125
3.1.2. Mixed methods 128
3.1.3. Postpositivism vs. pragmatism 130
3.1.4. Cultural neo-dualism 134
3.1.5. Triangulation 135
3.1.6. Mixed methods research design 136
3.2. Research process 140
3.3. Research methods 143
3.3.1. Literature review and analysis 144
3.3.2. Delphi study 147
3.3.2.1. The Delphi method – a history 148
3.3.2.2. Methodological rationale 151
3.3.3. Case studies 154
3.3.3.1. Methodological rationale 155
3.3.3.2. Social media data analysis and tag analysis 156
3.3.3.3. Tag analysis and information behaviour 166
3.3.3.4. Semi-structured interviews 168
3.4. Ethics 170
3.4.1. Ethics in fan studies 172
3.4.2. Ethics in web crawling 175
3.5. Summary 179

4. PART FOUR – THE DELPHI STUDY 180

4.1. Objectives of the Delphi study 180
4.2. Criteria for panel recruitment 181
4.3. Ethics 183
4.4. The first pilot 183
4.5. Recruitment 185
4.6. Materials & equipment 186
4.7. Round 1 187
4.7.1 Round 1 analysis 188
4.7.2 Example of process 191
4.8. The second pilot 194
4.9. Round 2 196
4.9.1 Round 2 analysis 196
4.10. Round 3 201
4.10.1 Round 3 analysis 202
4.11. Conclusions 205

5. PART FIVE – CASE STUDIES 215

5.1. Objectives of the case studies 217
5.2. Scope and limitations 218
5.3. Ethics 221
5.4. Materials & equipment 221
5.5. The sites 223
5.5.1. Tumblr 223
5.5.2. Archive of Our Own (AO3) 227
5.5.3. Etsy 229
5.6. Tag analysis 230
5.6.1. Tumblr 230
5.6.2. Archive of Our Own (AO3) 235

5.6.3. Etsy 238
5.7. Supplementary interviews 239
5.7.1. Criteria for participant recruitment 240
5.7.2. Recruitment 240
5.7.3. Process 242
5.8. Analysis 242
5.8.1. Tumblr 244
5.8.2. Archive of Our Own (AO3) 252
5.8.3. Etsy 259
5.9. Discussion and conclusions 268
5.9.1. Tumblr 269
5.9.2. Archive of Our Own (AO3) 273
5.9.3. Etsy 276
5.9.4. Summary 280

6. PART SIX – CONCLUSIONS 283

6.1. The information behaviour of fans 284
6.2. Fans and the information communication chain 291
6.2.1. Creation 291
6.2.2. Organisation 293
6.2.3. Dissemination 296
6.2.4. Discovery 297
6.2.5. Management 298
6.2.6. Analysis 300
6.2.7. Use 301
6.2.8. Preservation 302
6.2.9. Understanding 303
6.3. Impact on LIS 306
6.4. Impact on other domains 308
6.4.1. Copyright 308
6.4.2. Publishing 310
6.4.3. Media industry 312
6.4.4. Education 315
6.4.5. Other findings 316
6.5. Model of fan information behaviour 318
6.6. Summary 320

7. PART SEVEN – RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND FUTURE WORK 321

7.1. Recent developments 321
7.2. Future work 328

8. PART EIGHT – REFLECTION 331

APPENDICES 332

Appendix A – Twitter conversation with Matt Shaw 332
Appendix B – Delphi study consent form 334
Appendix C – Delphi study participant information sheet 335
Appendix D – Delphi Round 1 questions 338
Appendix E – Delphi thematic units 339
Appendix F – Information resources used by Delphi participants 345
Appendix G – Delphi round 1 statements – thematically coded 348
Appendix H – Delphi thematic units – by frequency 383
Appendix I – Delphi thamtic units – by question 395
Appendix J – Delphi questionnaire – Round 2 401
Appendix K – Delphi round 2 email sent to participants 409

APPENDIX L – DELPHI ROUND 2 – MAJORITY STATEMENTS THAT REACHED CONSENSUS 410
APPENDIX M – DELPHI ROUND 2 PARTICIPANT COMMENTS 416
APPENDIX N – DELPHI ROUND 2 STATEMENTS BY PERCENTAGE OF AGREEMENT 424
APPENDIX O – DELPHI STUDY CONSENSUS STATEMENTS – BY THEME 429
APPENDIX P – DELPHI STUDY STATEMENTS THAT DID NOT REACH CONSENSUS 434
APPENDIX Q – DELPHI ROUND 3 PARTICIPANT COMMENTS – THEMATICALLY CODED 436
APPENDIX R – CASE STUDY INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM 443
APPENDIX S – CASE STUDY INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET 444
APPENDIX T – CASE STUDY INTERVIEW GUIDES 447
APPENDIX U – CASE STUDY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS 448
APPENDIX V – CASE STUDY INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT RESPONSES 449

REFERENCES 456

INDEX 484

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: The Information Communication Chain. 13
Figure 2: Screencap from the Avengers of Oz: Age of Tin Man fan trailer 81
Figure 3: Fan-made interactive map of Westeros from Game of Thrones 82
Figure 4: Wilson's model of information behaviour.. 96
Figure 5: The ELIS model. 98
Figure 6: Hektor's information activities model 100
Figure 7: The information journey 102
Figure 8: Information-seeking and communication model (ISCM). 104
Figure 9: The Serious Leisure Perspective 105
Figure 10: Ecology of online Sims communities 107
Figure 11: Framework for examining 'A Workers Inquiry 2.0' 108
Figure 12: Cyclical model of consumption and production (produsage) 108
Figure 13: Initial conceptual model of fan information behaviour, November 2014 112
Figure 14: Second conceptual model of fan information behaviour, January 2015 113
Figure 15: Niglas' multidimensional model of research methodology 134
Figure 16: Cresswell and Plano Clark's (2011) mixed methods research designs 137
Figure 17: The multiphase research design 138
Figure 18: The final research timeline and workflow 142
Figure 19: The triangulation method used in this thesis to study the information behaviour of fans. 143
Figure 20: The basics of a social network 158
Figure 21: A co-occurence graph of the hashtag #glass 161
Figure 22: Research workflow 179
Figure 23: Participant 27's responses, showing coded sections by colour. 191
Figure 24: Screencap of various participant responses coded under 'Offline Community'. 192
Figure 25: Age of round 2 panel members. 197
Figure 26: Gender of round 2 panel members. 197
Figure 27: Percentage of self-identified acafans to non-acafans in round 2. 197
Figure 28: Excerpt of Round 3 Delphi questionnaire sent to Participant 1 203
Figure 29: Upper quartile consensus statements by theme. 207
Figure 30: Tumblr post by Participant B, 4th Feb 2016 224
Figure 31: Archive entry for an X-Men Evolution fanfiction on AO3 228
Figure 32: Couples picture frame – Rogue and Gambit 229
Figure 33: AO3's 'Romy' tag homepage 236
Figure 34: Co-occurrence graph for the 'Romy' tag on Tumblr. 245
Figure 35: Co-occurrence graph for the 'Romy' tag on Tumblr with a betweeness centrality of 1+. 246
Figure 36: Total Tumblr tag count by type 247

Figure 37: Total Tumblr tag count by sub-type 247
Figure 38: A comparison of Tumblr tag counts by type, before and after normalisation 249
Figure 39: A comparison of Tumblr tag counts by sub-type, before and after normalisation 249
Figure 40: Comparison of tag type usage by Participant A and Participant B, by percentage 251
Figure 41: Co-occurrence graph for the 'Rogue/Remy LeBeau' tag on AO3 (wrangled dataset) 254
Figure 42: Co-occurrence graph for the 'Rogue/Remy LeBeau' tag on AO3 (wrangled dataset) with a betweeness centrality of 1+. 255
Figure 43: Comparison of pre-wrangled and post-wrangled tag names, by type 256
Figure 44: Comparison of pre-wrangled and post-wrangled tag names, by sub-type 256
Figure 45: Comparison of the percentage of the total tag count in the pre- and post-wrangled datasets, arranged by tag type..... 258
Figure 46: Comparison of the percentage of the total tag count in the pre- and post-wrangled datasets, arranged by tag sub-type..... 259
Figure 47: Co-occurrence graph for the 'Rogue and Gambit' tag on Etsy. 261
Figure 48: Co-occurrence graph for the 'Rogue and Gambit' tag on Etsy with a betweenness centrality of 1+. 262
Figure 49: Percentage of Etsy tag usage by type..... 263
Figure 50: Percentage of Etsy tag usage by sub-type..... 263
Figure 51: Phoenix symbol curved outline decal, on sale on Etsy 265
Figure 52: Comparison of the total tag count by type, across the three platforms scraped..... 268
Figure 53: Comparison of the total tag count by sub-type, across the three platforms scraped..... 269
Figure 54: A 'Questions Answered' Tumblr post by Participant A. 272
Figure 55: How the source text and the fan text fit into the information communication chain 293
Figure 56: The final version of the model of information behaviour 319

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Impact areas linked to thesis objectives. 27
Table 2: Fans, cultists and enthusiasts 31
Table 3: Abercrombie and Longhurst's audience continuum. 31
Table 4: Hills' (2013) proposed bi-partite model of participatory culture. 33
Table 5: The differing characteristics of casual and dedicated fans 35
Table 6: Summary of section 2.1.1. findings, linked to thesis objectives. 36
Table 7: Summary of section 2.1.2. findings, linked to thesis objectives. 52
Table 8: The structure of fan information 79
Table 9: Summary of section 2.2. findings, linked to thesis objectives 91
Table 10: Characteristics of fan information behaviour and relevant models of information behaviour. 111
Table 11: Summary of literature review findings, linked to thesis objectives, impact areas and Delphi study questions. 120
Table 12: Reasons for conducting a Delphi study 152
Table 13: Typology of purposive sampling types 183
Table 14: Thematic statements gathered under the thematic unit of 'Offline Community'. 194
Table 15: APMO Cut-Off Rate 199
Table 16: Final designation of statements 204
Table 17: Consensus statements by quartile 204
Table 18: Delphi upper quartile consensus statements 206
Table 19: Delphi non-consensus statements. 208
Table 20: Summary of Delphi findings, linked to thesis objectives. 213
Table 21: Summary of Delphi findings, linked to thesis objectives, impact areas and case study aims. 214
Table 22: Tag types (Smith 2008a). 217
Table 23: Fan-tag taxonomy as developed during analysis of the 'Romy' tag 243
Table 24: Case study findings, linked to the case study objectives. 281
Table 25: Summary of case study findings, linked to thesis objectives and impact areas. 282
Table 26: Research findings. 320

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the information behaviour of cult media fan communities on the internet, using three novel methods which have not previously been applied to this domain. Firstly, a review, analysis and synthesis of the literature related to fan information behaviour, both within the disciplines of LIS and fan studies, revealed unique aspects of fan information behaviour, particularly in regards to produsage, copyright, and creativity. The findings from this literature analysis were subsequently investigated further using the Delphi method and tag analysis. A new Delphi variant – the Serious Leisure Delphi – was developed through this research. The Delphi study found that participants expressed the greatest levels of consensus on statements on fan behaviour that were related to information behaviour and information-related issues. Tag analysis was used in a novel way, as a tool to examine information behaviour. This found that fans have developed a highly granular classification system for fanworks, and that on one particular repository a 'curated folksonomy' was being used with great success. Fans also use tags for a variety of reasons, including communicating with one another, and writing meta-commentary on their posts. The research found that fans have unique information behaviours related to classification, copyright, entrepreneurship, produsage, mentorship and publishing. In the words of Delphi participants – "being in fandom means being in a knowledge space," and "fandom is a huge information hub just by existing". From these findings a model of fan information behaviour has been developed, which could be further tested in future research.

GLOSSARY

Acafan: Academics who are fans and research fandom (see note 43, p.125 for discussion).

Anime: (アニメ) Japanese cartoons or animation.

Beta-reading: a term taken from 'beta-testing', referring to a form of peer review and editorship, especially in the composition of fanfiction, wherein one fan (known as a **beta-reader**) will edit, correct and critique a work by another fan.

Canon: The official or authoritative version of a fandom, as opposed to the **fanon**.

Con: short for 'convention'; events where fans gather, sometimes fan-arranged, sometimes arranged by official bodies (e.g. TV studios, etc.). Examples include Comicon (for comics fans), Anime Expo (for anime fans); Shore Leave (for Star Trek fans); Dragon Con (for multiple fandoms or genres).

Cosplay: (コスプレ) Japanese 'kosupure', short for 'costume play'; the practice of dressing up as a fictional character from a media franchise or fandom.

Cult media: Any media that has acquired a cult following, usually comprising a passionate fanbase that continues to engage with the source text long after its production has ended/discontinued.

Easter eggs: a hidden object, message or inside joke, intentionally inserted by producers into a media product, usually for the benefit of fans.

Fanart: amateur artworks based on the characters and worlds of existing intellectual properties; usually refers only to image-based art.

Fandom: the following of a certain media franchise, sport, person, activity etc.; or, a group of fans.

Fanfiction: also **fanfic** or **fic.** Amateur fiction that uses, is based on, or expands upon the characters and worlds of existing intellectual properties, e.g. Star Wars fanfiction. **Real person fanfiction** refers to fanfiction written about real people, e.g. musicians, actors, sports figures, etc.

Fanon: An element of a fandom that is widely accepted among the fan community, although it has no basis in **canon**.

Fantagging: A type of folksonomy; tagging by fans of fanworks and fan-related information.

Fanworks: an umbrella term for all amateur works created by fans for or about their fandom. This includes fanfiction, fanart, games, costumes, props, podfic, sculpture, etc.

Fanzines: a portmanteau of 'fandom' and 'magazines'. Small amateur press magazines which include various types of fanworks, or fan information. These were a common way of sharing fanworks and/or knowledge before the internet.

Filk songs: amateur songs written and performed by fans about their favourite fandom or characters.

Franchise: a collection of fictional works depicting a particular universe, e.g. the Star Trek franchise. A **media franchise** refers to a collection of such fictional works that are

produced across multiple formats, e.g. TV, film, comics, books, toys, etc. The Marvel Universe is a good example of this.

Gif: short animations, usually clips or shots from visual media, which highlight a character, or a mood or feeling engendered by a fandom. Named after the .gif file format.

Headcanon: Individual fan interpretations of a fandom, not necessarily supported by the official canon, e.g. "In my headcanon, Han and Chewie always have space chess nights on a Wednesday".

Kink: a sexual preference within a fandom, e.g. "Wingfic is my kink" means "I'm interested in reading fanfic about sex with winged characters".

Manga: (漫画) Japanese comics.

Manips: Short for **photo manipulations**; a type of fanart where photos are manipulated to portray fan worlds or characters using imaging software.

Meta: Fan literature, usually in essay form, which discuss conceptual issues in fandom, or about a fandom.

Mods: or **game mods**, short for **modifications**; amateur customisations made to video- or computer-game assets, e.g. new costumes for characters, new objects to play with in-game, etc.

Oekaki: (お絵描き) a Japanese term meaning 'to draw'; refers to an internet bulletin board where users can draw and post art online.

Podfic: serialised amateur recordings of fanfiction, similar to audiobooks.

Profic: antonym of **fanfic**. Professionally written and published fiction. Usually used in juxtaposition to **fanfic**.

Prompt: a theme, plot point or scenario, given by fans (sometimes as part of a contest or challenge) as inspiration for a fanwork, usually fanfic.

Reclist: a list of recommendations (e.g. of fanfiction, comics issues, TV episodes, etc.), compiled by fans for other fans.

Remediation: Generally, the process of remedying something; in this context meaning the incorporation or representation of one medium in another (see Bolter and Grusin 2000). Verb: to *remediate*; adjective: *remediative.*

Ship: Short for 'relationship'. Noun: a romantic pairing, e.g. "Kirk/Spock is my ship". Verb: To support a romantic pairing, e.g. "I ship Kirk/Spock".

Slash: homoerotic fanfiction; gay fanfiction. **Femslash** refers to lesbian fanfiction.

Tag wrangling: The practice of merging fantags with standardised tags, as instituted on the fanfiction archive, Archive of Our Own.

Vids: fan-made videos, usually set to music, incorporating spliced shots/clips from a TV programme, movie, cartoon, videogame, etc., usually to illustrate the relationship between two characters.

1. PART ONE: Introduction

1.1. Personal statement

As a lifelong fan of cult media, I have spent a great deal of my leisure time devoted to the consumption of fan artefacts and franchises. This has, as far as I can remember, been coupled with remediative activities such as the well-known fan practices of producing fanfiction and fanart. When I first encountered the internet circa 1997, the world of fandom opened up from my paper-strewn bedroom onto the global vistas of the World Wide Web. For the first time I was able to share my creations with others, and put my fandoms on display by building my own websites, posting my fanfiction and fanart, and by sharing fan knowledge and news with other fans. I came to grips with fanwork repositories such as Elfwood, Fanfiction.net and deviantART. Later, I discovered fan-based wiki databases, dedicated fan fora, and Livejournal blogs. I became a mentor to younger, novice fans, and even won fan-run awards for my fanworks. Online fandom was a place where I could give free rein to my creative urges, encourage others to indulge theirs, and – crucially – share my fannish experiences and activities with others. On the internet, a fan never feels alone.

It wasn't until 2011, when I began a Masters in Library Science, that I realised that several of the professional skills I was learning with regards to information organisation and provision were skills that many fans were engaging in on a regular basis. The only difference was that fans had no formal background or qualifications, and they did not do it for money. Either they were doing it because it came naturally, or because they enjoyed it.

Further into my Masters, I encountered new ideas about how we handle information in the Information Society – concepts such as crowdsourcing, crowdfunding, folksonomies, prosumers, produsage. I began to see all these mirrored in the collaborative and participatory activities of fans: in the way fans came together to create tags to classify fanfiction on Archive of Our Own; in the way they contributed to fan wikis such as the Marvel Database; in the

kickstarters they organised to fund fan projects; and the way they pooled their resources to create an online archive of game mods for all to download from. Fans were engaging in information work, but 'work' wasn't quite accurate enough to describe this behaviour – it seemed more like information 'play'.

For my Masters dissertation, I undertook an ethnographic study of a digital library for game mods that had been created and curated by fans of the *Sims* computer game. This was a fascinating area of research that led me to explore the links between fans and new, participatory approaches that are now so much a part of the Information Society. This research uncovered the passion that fans have for documenting a body of fan-related knowledge, for creating fanwork collections, adding to them, and sharing them. But, having completed my dissertation and received my Masters degree, I found I was not completely satisfied. I had studied the information behaviour of one fan community. But this was but one community amongst many, and it was unlikely that my findings would be generalizable to fandom as a whole entity. There were other aspects I had neglected that intrigued me, such as what else the literature had to say about the information behaviour of fans, or whether the discipline of fan studies had anything to add to our knowledge on this subject; or, indeed, what fans themselves had to say about their information work. And, most importantly, whether there was anything LIS could learn from the passionate drive fans had to engage in often high quality information work, entirely unpaid.

This thesis seeks to address these and other related questions, in what became a natural progression from the research carried out in my Masters dissertation. What it hopes to uncover is a more *general* insight into the information behaviour of fans, and how these findings might apply to the field of LIS. It is also an exercise in mapping out what amateur, participatory and collaborative groups might have to contribute to new forms of information work in the Information Age.

1.2. Contributions to knowledge

The research undertaken in this thesis presents five major contributions to knowledge. These are as follows:

1. *An analysis and synthesis of the LIS and fan studies literature related to fan information behaviour.* Very little work has been done on fan information behaviour within both disciplines, and virtually no *systematic* research on the subject has been undertaken. What does exist is fragmentary and/or peripheral to wider contexts. This thesis brings together the literature of both disciplines for the first time, thus establishing definitively what is known about fan information behaviour. The findings of this literature analysis and synthesis include: fans favour informal sources over formal ones; they develop unique and sophisticated bibliographical standards and classification systems; they also develop their own editing and publishing practices; they are highly interested in preserving their own culture and are actively taking measures to do so; their activity has unique implications for copyright, education, publishing, and the media industry. The complete summary of findings is presented in Table 11, p.120.
2. *The development of a new Delphi method variant – the Serious Leisure Delphi*. This variant allows the use of panel members who are *not* experts in the professional and/or academic sense, but who are experts in a serious leisure context (i.e. they are self-taught and intrinsically driven). These might include hobbyists, enthusiasts, amateurs (such as amateur genealogists, historians, artists, etc.) or volunteers, as well as fans. An in-depth description of the Serious Leisure Delphi process is given in chapter 4 of this thesis.
3. *The development of tag analysis as a new, quantitative tool to study human information behaviour.* While tag analysis, or tag network analysis, has been used within the information, computer and data sciences as a method for mapping

social or data networks, it has not been used before as a method for investigating information behaviour. In this thesis, tag analysis has been used for the first time to investigate information behaviour. Certain measures in tag networks can shed light on information behaviour – for instance, betweeness centrality can pinpoint which tags are the most efficient carriers of information, and tag clusters can pinpoint which classification types are most important to fans when categorising fanworks. An in-depth description of the tag analysis process is given in chapter 5 of this thesis.

4. *The development of a new model of fan information behaviour.* The research in this thesis found that there was no single model of information behaviour that adequately represented fan information behaviour. Therefore, a new model of fan information behaviour has been developed, using the findings of this thesis. This model can be used in future studies of fan information behaviour, and is presented in Figure 56, p.319.
5. *A focus on the creative productive aspects of information behaviour.* These aspects – which have thus far been neglected in conventional information behaviour literature – have been explored extensively in this thesis, and should lay the groundwork for further research into the creative, hedonic and performative aspects of information behaviour.

1.3. Research context

Some of the first groups to widely adopt the internet during its early years were fan communities (Jenkins 2006a, pp.37-138; De Kosnik 2016a, p.11). Alongside hackers and academics, fans readily embraced the digital world and its increased accessibility to other like-minded people who shared their interests. To fans that had grown up outside the electronic world, in a cultural milieu dominated by the annual convention and the convoluted fanzine circuits, the internet represented an expansive vista that allowed fans to congregate over

untold distances, and to locate fellow communities that had previously been invisible to them. For the first time, isolated pockets of fandom discovered that they were not alone.

But more than this, the internet facilitated the growth and efficiency of information networks that had previously been bound to the offline and the analogue and were thus restricted by the physical limitations inherent in spatially and physically embodied forms. It was not merely a question of access. The internet afforded the opportunity to *contribute* to this growing body of fan-related knowledge. Traditionally Xeroxed fanzines could migrate online and gain a wider readership; fans could exchange the latest news on dedicated Usenet and Listserv boards; and others were able to set up their own personal sites, where they could showcase their own fan-related work, such as stories (*fanfiction*) and artwork (*fanart*) (Coppa 2006).

One might ask why fans were one of the first adopters of digital online technologies, and whilst this is not an easy question to answer, Coppa (2006), in her essay on the history of fandom and fan communities, posits the internet's sense of immediacy as the one of the main attractions. Fans are inherently social creatures, enjoying the discursive interactions that come with discussing and debating their areas of interest – the latest episode of their favourite TV show, for example (Hills 2013; Busse and Gray 2011; Fiske 1992). By nature they take pleasure in the dissection of these 'source texts', cultural artefacts that are, nevertheless, associated with 'low culture', with the throwaway (e.g. comics), the ephemeral (e.g. the latest one-hit wonder), and the so-called second-rate (e.g. cult horror movies). They delight in negotiating and reconstructing these texts to appease their own personal desires, much in the same way that Michel de Certeau summarises in his concept of 'textual poaching' (1984); a concept that was later taken up and applied directly to fandom by media scholar, Henry Jenkins ([1992] 2013). They also take pride in acting as moderators, archivists and administrators, in acting as intermediaries between the text and other fans, sharing their readings and impressions of that text, and in serving as connoisseurs to the wider community,

cherry-picking fan-related works and anthologising and organising them in fanzines, data clearing houses and other information resources (Jenkins 2006a).

Before the internet, fans engaged in these activities extensively, building an "informal postal network, circulating letters and amateur publications" (Jenkins 2006a). Many fans would make the effort to renew physical ties with the wider fan community at least once a year at national or international conventions. Some fans were unable to participate in these due to constraints of time, money or distance; and fan activity tended to be very America-centric. This put fans from other parts of the globe at a disadvantage, and whilst the postal networks offered a way to bridge that gap, it could be costly, and the quality of printed fanzines and other fan-related works (henceforth *fanworks*, to quote fan nomenclature) were often of poor quality (Bacon-Smith 1992).

The World Wide Web mitigated these shortcomings. In an instant, fans were able to traverse the globe, connect with others, and share their work at the cost of an internet connection. In the early days, there were still insurmountable challenges. Dial-up connections did not deal well with non-text media. Loading picture, video and sound files proved to be problematic, yet this triumvirate was intrinsic to the creative aspects inherent in *fanart* (artworks featuring fan characters or worlds), *vids* (videos spliced from different scenes of a TV show or movie, usually set to popular music) and *filk songs* (songs written and performed by fans about their favourite fandom or characters). Nevertheless, fans rapidly took to the net as they perceived its importance in terms of accessibility, both to other fans and the fandom itself, and as a facilitator of what Pierre Levy (1999) has termed *collective intelligence* – that is, the concept of a collaborative intelligence that is the sum of many parts, based upon the premise that no one person can know *everything*, but by pooling together one's resources, one may at least come close to it:

> [Collective intelligence] is a form of *universally distributed intelligence,* constantly enhanced, coordinated in real time, and resulting in the effective mobilization of skills […] No one knows everything, everyone knows something, all *knowledge* resides in humanity. There is no

> transcendent store of knowledge and knowledge is simply the sum of what we know (pp.13-14; original italics).

Here, in the digital world of cyberspace, fans discovered a kind of Promised Land where, for the first time, they could come together, leave behind the disparate pockets of community housed in physical space, and gain a sense of *presence* that they had only felt close to achieving at the yearly fan conventions. They had found, to poach Howard Rheingold's phraseology, a "homestead on the electronic frontier" ([1993] 2000). They were, as Coppa (2006) notes, able to "customize the fan experience". And as broadband came to be widely adopted in the early 2000's, and mobile technologies offered other ways to access and promulgate fandom, so fan communities and producers of cult fandom alike came to explore digital avenues on a number of different platforms, in what Jenkins (2006b) has called *convergence culture*, where franchises such as the hugely popular cult sci-fi movie *The Matrix* can be followed over myriad media such as TV, animation, videogames, comics and books. At the present point in time, fans have become inured to having their fannish desires fed by this paradigm of *transmedia storytelling*, where the source text is not merely encoded into a single form, but is also instantiated in and proliferates through a wide variety of media, saturating both digital and analogue space with fannish texts. It is:

> a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience (Jenkins 2007, n.p.).

The lives of the initiated – the fans themselves – are thus permeated by the objects of their fannish desires; but more than this, Web 2.0 and the read-write technologies that have given birth to the era of social media have made it possible for fans to permeate their own worlds with the accoutrements of the fan text – it is no longer a top-down hierarchy where it is the producer, writer or creator that feeds the so-called gullible masses what they (think) they want; it is a bottom-up world, or an unranked heterarchy (Bruns 2008; 2006), wherein fans are able to have a hand in making their own worlds, and to share those worlds with one another.

The migration of fandom to the internet tells us two things. First, that fans are social. Second, that they embrace the affordances of the digital world (Jenkins 2006a). It is not merely their desire to create new, appropriated texts from the sources they admire. It is to organise them, index them, classify them; it is to share them, to disseminate them; it is to comment upon them, to review them, to dissect them; and lastly it is to remediate them into further derivative texts.

1.4. Aim & objectives

Much has been done in various disciplines to elucidate and extrapolate from the behaviours described above, from fan to cultural to media studies, from sociology to literary theory. Recent research has looked at fans through the lens of game studies (Jalamo 2016), audience studies (Janissary Collective 2014; Jones 2014b; Chin 2013), education (Black 2009; Edfeldt, Fjordevik and Inose 2012), and publishing (Peckosie and Hill 2015; Bay 2014; von Veh 2013). What all these approaches have in common is that they have touched upon – but never specifically addressed – the relationship fans have with *information*; their information behaviour. In the extensive literature on fans and fandom, we see tantalising glimpses of an attitude to information that is both rich and complex. From Jenkins' 'textual poachers' ([1992] 2013), readers who 'scribble in the margins' of official texts and harken back to the medieval scribe who added to and expounded upon the work of his forebears through a process of what we might term today *read-write* culture; to Sihvonen's fans of *The Sims* videogame (2011), who create intricate personal information management systems (Jones and Teevan 2007) with which to organise and store their game artefacts; the treatment of information and documents is an aspect of fandom which, whilst little acknowledged, assumes a deep significance both in the individual fan's life, and in the fan community itself. One only has to view, for example, the online comics databases, TV show wikis, videogame walkthroughs, fandom-specific ontologies and fanwork depositaries to appreciate the level of dedication and zeal that fans have in sharing their knowledge and creativity. This is all the more astounding for the fact that

most of these sites are voluntary efforts built on nothing more than the personal passion fans have for these sometimes large-scale projects.

The aim and objectives of this thesis are shown below.

AIM

To explore the information behaviour of cult media fan communities.

OBJECTIVES

1. To gain more understanding of the information behaviour of a unique group of people, and therefore to improve planning for information services and/or architectures.
2. To investigate fanwork collections, their place as cultural products, and how fans create, disseminate, promote, organise, access and preserve them.
3. To explore whether fan information behaviour can be generalised to, and whether it can inform, other domains, including LIS, the publishing and media industries, education, and copyright.

In order to address these objectives, this thesis applies a threefold approach: firstly, to summarise from the literature those aspects of fan behaviour that pertain to the field of Library & Information Science (LIS) and to derive a draft model of fan information behaviour. Secondly, to engage fan views of their own information behaviour, via a Delphi study. Thirdly, to examine the information behaviour of fans through case studies of online fan communities. To conclude, the preliminary model of fan information behaviour devised from the literature analysis will be examined and updated in the light of the empirical work, and a conceptual model of online fan information derived, which will help both visualise and ultimately understand information behaviour of cult media fan communities.

1.5. Limitations & scope of thesis

Fan studies is a wide-ranging discipline. The subjects of this study are *cult media fans*. This is in contrast to fans of, for example, sports, celebrities, musicians, popular music, etc. There is no easy or universally agreed upon definition of the term 'fan', let alone that of the cult media fan (this is discussed later in section 2.1.1) – Hills (2002) has warned against the perils of synthetically fixing the term in order for the researcher to create an object of study. However, Hills (2002) does define 'cultishness' as "a marginality constructed against the tastes and practices of the 'mainstream'" (p.83). This is not quite narrow enough for the purposes of this thesis, as it could apply as well to non-mainstream music and movie stars as it could to the subjects of this study. I have therefore chosen to make a rather arbitrary distinction between the cult fandoms I am studying here and the ones I am not. Broadly speaking, I have chosen to disregard those fandoms based on 'real people' (whether they be cult icons or not) – for instance, musicians, movie stars, sports figures, etc. – and focus on text-based cult media fandoms such as TV shows, movies, videogames, comics, cartoons, books, and so on.

It should also be noted that this study is also restricted to Western, English-language-based fan cultures, and to English-speaking fans. It does not focus on the transcultural fandoms that may encompass practices other than those explored here[1]. Therefore the literature referred to focuses on Western-based fandoms, and, whilst the internet will allow access to a global fan community, the individual fans studied in the empirical section of this thesis are English-speakers (whether as a native or second language).

[1] This is, admittedly, an ambiguous area, as many foreign fan practices (most notably from Japan) have been appropriated by Western fans. An example is *cosplay*, the practice of dressing up and acting as a favourite fictional character. Japanese fandoms, such as those based on *anime* (Japanese animation) and *manga* (Japanese comics) are also popular in the West, and are now widely available in English; therefore, fans of both forms are included in this study, although firmly in a Western context. For more on transcultural fandoms, see Chin and Morimoto (2013).

1.6. Rationale

Since this thesis seeks to explore the information behaviour of fans, it is first important to establish what is meant by the term 'information behaviour'. Information behaviour is a complex concept, described by Wilson (2000) as:

> the totality of human behavior in relation to sources and channels of information, including both active and passive information seeking, and information use. Thus, it includes face-to-face communication with others, as well as the passive reception of information as in, for example, watching TV advertisements, without any intention to act on the information given (p.49).

This is an overarching definition, under which Wilson includes the concepts of:

- *Information seeking behaviour* – the purposive seeking of information to satisfy some goal;
- *Information searching behaviour* – the 'micro-level' of information seeking, or the interactions between humans and information systems;
- *Information use behaviour* – the integration of acquired information into a human's knowledge schema (2000, pp.49-50).

Wilson's overarching theory of information behaviour (2016) seeks to include all aspects of human interaction with information. This includes the emotional or everyday context of a person's life; whether they are collaborating with others or part of a community; whether information is obtained serendipitously; cases of information avoidance; the motivations for information seeking; and so on. The utility of Wilson's original models and subsequent theory (2016) has underpinned years of research into information behaviour. Several models have been developed utilising Wilson's basic premise, of which the most notable are Ellis's framework of information-seeking behaviour (1989), Kuhlthau's Information Seeking Process (1991), Godbold's (2006) model of information behaviour, and Ingwersen and Järvelin's (2005) model (other models of information behaviour are discussed in detail in section 2.3.1). Yet these models stop short of defining information behaviour outside that of

the information seeker. In order to satisfy the remit of this thesis, which explores fan information behaviour as it relates to other bodies and/or concepts – such as the media industry, education and copyright law – and to source texts and fanworks themselves, a broader scope is desirable.

To this end, the information communication chain has been used. First posited by Robinson (2009), this model takes a more holistic approach, integrating information and communication into a comprehensive representation of what happens to information from its creation to its assimilation into a user's knowledge map and beyond. In its original iteration (Robinson 2009, p.55), the chain included:

- Creation
- Dissemination
- Organisation
- Indexing
- Storage
- Use

Since then it has been broadened to encapsulate a far more detailed view of the process (see Figure 1). Throughout this thesis, the concept of 'information behaviour' will refer to this broader view, rather than Wilson's model and others derived from his work. This does not merely include user(s) interaction with information, but also information sources, information providers, environmental and personal context, and the communication between these different facets, as seen in Robson and Robinson's (2013) Information Seeking and Communication Model (and as discussed in section 2.3.1.1.6).

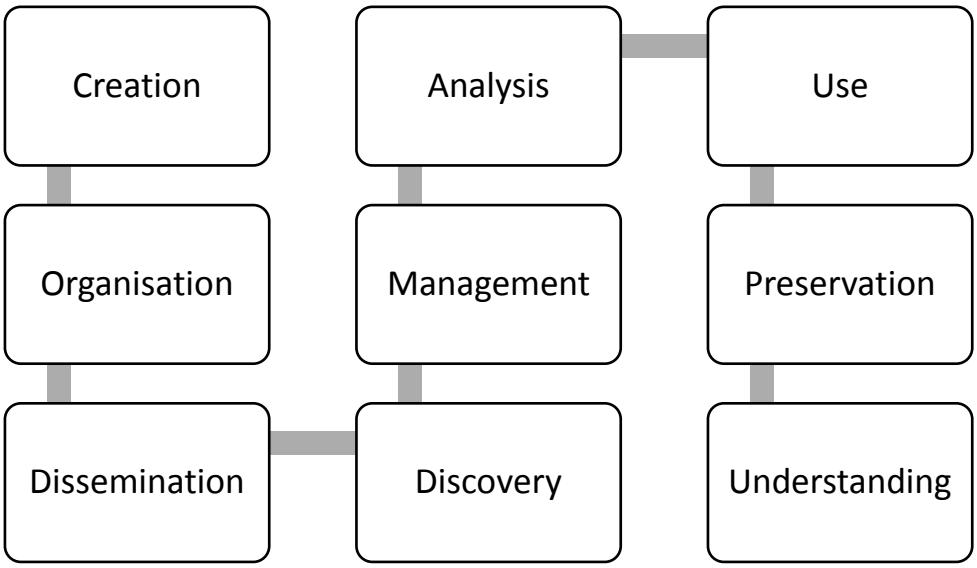


Figure 1: The Information Communication Chain (unpublished; Robinson 2017).

It should be noted, in regards to information behaviour, and particularly in respect to the community that is being investigated here (i.e. the fan community), that information behaviour as a subject of study had its origin in user studies. Wilson's original article on the topic in 1981 noted: "apart from information retrieval there is virtually no other area of information science that has occasioned as much research effort and writing as 'user studies'" (Wilson 1981, p.3). Motivation for information behaviour, and understanding those motivations, has been part of the basic remit of information behaviour studies for many decades. What Bawden (2006) has called the "simplicity" of Wilson's model has allowed it to be utilised broadly within information behaviour research, with Bawden noting that his original 1981 paper has been cited in "studies of information users and information needs in a variety of settings; engineers, Ugandan entrepreneurs, migrant Hispanic farm workers, home Internet users, young people, elderly people, history students, veterinarians, arts administrators, agricultural managers, food consumers, academic researchers, and many others" (2006, p.672). The way a user interacts with information is defined by context – and this context is defined by several facets, including occupation, lifestyle, marital status, health, age, nationality, and so on. Thus there is a preponderance of literature within LIS on user studies;

and while this work has sought to explicate information behaviour within the library, professions and specific domains, more recently this has extended to socially-situated and often informal contexts (Case 2012; Blandford and Attfield 2010). Much of this latter informal information exchange is within what is called 'communities of practice' (Wenger 1999), which Blandford and Attfield (2010) define as groups where:

> […] individuals participate in communities, learning from and contributing to those communities, evolving effective practices in response to new opportunities and needs (p.19).

Wenger (1999) himself situates communities of practice within what might be called the 'everyday' – families, workers, students, scientists, and Alcoholics Anonymous members are all members of a community of practice and, indeed:

> [w]e all belong to communities of practice […] we belong to several communities of practice at any given time. And the communities of practice to which we belong change over the course of our lives. In fact, communities of practice are everywhere (p.6).

If this is so, then we may also consider that communities of practice may also extend to the informal networks that form around our hobbies and interests. In fact, our leisure activities can be exceedingly information-rich areas of our lives in which we engage in complex information practices for our own pleasure. The role of 'serious leisure' in our informational lives has been explored by the likes of Stebbins (1992) and Savoleinan (1995), and these works have opened up LIS to a greater interest in non-work informational behaviour, such as that of hobbyists, enthusiasts and volunteers (see Case 2012, pp.336-338 for an overview of studies done in this area). This work may be considered important because such behaviour is "not paid work, yet may be work-like in the intensity with which they are pursued" (Case 2012, p.336). Armstrong and Hagel (2000), looking at such groups from a digital- or internet-based perspective, described them as 'communities of interest'.

Fans may be considered a part of this group of 'non-paid workers', yet there has been little research into them within the discipline of LIS itself. Nevertheless, from these few

studies[2] it becomes clear that fans have evolved their own complex information behaviours, usually based around communities that are more reminiscent of what Celia Pearce (2011) called 'communities of play'. Pearce sees these communities as similar to communities of practice and interest, except that they are built on practices of play rather than "work or folk" practice, as she puts it. Whilst her work focuses on the groups that have built up around MMOG's (massively multiplayer online games) such as *Second Life* and *Uru*, it is, nevertheless, not inappropriate to extend her findings to fans in general. The subjects of Pearce's study may be considered gaming fans, but their play is not so different to the play of fans of other new or cult media. Indeed, Pearce herself acknowledges that fan activities such as cosplay are important examples of social play, ones that are "deeply tied to imagination, fantasy, and the creation of a fictional identity", and are endemic to "these play communities [that] devote a high level of effort and creativity to their play culture, often to the bewilderment of the population at large" (p.3). In further describing the various creative and social practices of the *Uru* gaming community – such as creating avatars, new gaming worlds, community metarules and even inter- or intra-community disputes – Pearce concludes that "[a]ll of these behaviours suggest a level of emotional investment that may be as high as or even greater than investments in communities of either practice or interest" (p.138).

It is my contention that fans also belong to communities of play and that much of their information behaviour has evolved in response to the ludic tendencies of community members, tendencies towards play, pleasure and enjoyment. It is users with these tendencies that have been relatively neglected in LIS, users whose information behaviours might be described as "open-ended, nonlinear and participatory, unpredictable and labile" (Pearce 2011, p.55). This academic neglect is critical because it means that LIS is overlooking the perspective of a unique and diverse group of information users whose associated behaviour is born from a context of play, passion and, more importantly, fantasy; users who engage in

[2] What little research has been done is discussed in detail in section 2.2.3.2.

emergent practices of co-creation which are afforded and sometimes encouraged by media producers.

In an era of globally networked information flows (Lash 2002), wherein the great majority of information interactions are no longer confined merely to mediation through professional intermediaries, it is important to consider the place of fans within these information flows, especially when, as we have seen, their behaviour is a) voluntary; b) pleasure- or play-based; c) generous. It is also important to consider that, in the context of fans, or indeed, in that of hobbyists and enthusiasts, it can be misleading to draw a distinction between these groups and gatekeepers, as – as has been discussed above – many fans also act as gatekeepers and knowledge experts for their peers (Jenkins 2006a). It is important to note that here gatekeeper is not meant in a pejorative sense, but in the more neutral sense used within LIS – that of an information gatekeeper. Case (2012, p.339) defines a gatekeeper as "one who controls the flow of information over a channel: shaping, emphasizing or withholding it". Gatekeeping is a sensitive subject in fandom, as it is often seen as a method of inclusion and exclusion within fan communities (e.g. Gonzalez's 2016 paper on gatekeeping in the Swan Queen fandom). This gives the lie to the assumption that fandom is a generally heterarchical, self-governing structure: "gatekeeping persists and amateur specialists emerge over time through their commitment to the community and access to specific kinds of information" (Vadde 2017, p.36). Gatekeeping can be beneficial for a community, in that the gatekeeper may pass on specialist knowledge and thus enrich that community.

1.7. Impact

Fans and fandom impact on several areas where LIS can claim overlapping interests. In this section, these areas will be explored, and it is hoped that a better understanding of the potential impact of this thesis may be gleaned. This section also ties into objective number 3 of this thesis (see p.9).

1.7.1. Copyright

The intersection of fandom and information law can be found in the contentious area of fanworks and copyright. Fandom has long had a fraught relationship with issues of copyright, which has been explicated in Johnson (2016), Libeler (2015), Lantagne (2014) and Romanenkova (2014). It is impossible to detail the complexities inherent in information law here, but it is worth bearing in mind that these laws are regionally distinct and that this may have some bearing on questions of copyright, not least where fanworks are concerned. Yet it is important to consider information law as this is one of the four frameworks of the information society (Bawden and Robinson 2012)[3], and in order to situate fans *within* the information society, an investigation of copyright and intellectual property is vital. This is doubly important in a digital age where "legal issues surrounding the internet are likely to become increasingly difficult" and in which "information professionals need to contribute more to the ongoing legal debate" (Oppenheim 2008, p.938).

First, it need hardly be said that by their very nature, fanworks may be considered a breach of copyright; yet the situation is more complex than this suggests. Romanenkova (2014) describes this:

> Many claim fanfiction is a prime example of non-infringing fair use under the copyright fair use doctrine. Most fanfiction is not written to profit the author and is considered first and foremost a labor of love, which theoretically satisfies the fair use factors under section 107 of the Copyright Act 10. However, such a classification is far from certain given the ambiguous nature of the fair use test and the lack of a wholesale exception for fan works. Thus, fanfiction writers run the risk of infringing original works as authors of unauthorized derivatives (p.184).

There are other complicating factors: for example, that different types of fanworks are given different degrees of leniency as far as copyright is concerned (e.g. the sale of fanart is treated with much less concern than the sale of fanfiction [Jones 2014a]); and that different

[3] The three other frameworks being information policies, ethics, and values (Bawden and Robinson 2012, p.234).

rights-holders take different attitudes towards fanworks (e.g. authors like Anne Rice vehemently oppose the writing of fanfiction, whereas J. K. Rowling takes a more relaxed approach [for more detail, see Pugh 2005]). Three interesting cases regarding rights-holders in conflict with fanfiction authors (only one having been litigated) are given in Schwabach (2011, ch. 4) – these present some of the very different concerns rights-holders might have regarding the appropriation of their work, even if for transformative[4] purposes; they also discuss the legal implications of such cases in some detail.

Even if one assumes that fans all create fanworks and disseminate them in ways that adhere to fair use, not all fans create fanworks on a level playing field – fans of Anne Rice's works are not afforded the same opportunities as other fans[5]. A final complication – certainly in terms of the information society at large – centres around the fact that fanworks are part are a wider phenomenon, that of 'remix culture' as law professor Lawrence Lessig (2008) terms it – a culture wherein Google mashups, YouTube clips and iTunes playlists are made endlessly shareable through the internet and digital technologies. Moreover, Lessig (2008; 2004) makes it clear that this culture of copying, re-appropriation and remediation is now a part of our everyday lives.

The relationship between fans and remix culture is necessarily a close one, because fan creativity is firmly played out within that culture, and by the same token it engenders all the attendant problems concerned with copyright law and intellectual property[6]. This relationship is explored more fully by Johnson (2016), Liebler (2015), Romanenkova (2014), Tushnet (2010) and McCardle (2003), who suggest that a review of copyright law would help to

[4] Transformative here meaning to change the meaning, message, intent or expression of an original work.

[5] For example, the popular online fanfiction repository, Fanfiction.net, does not allow users to upload and share any stories based on Anne Rice's fictional worlds; she has threatened legal action against fanfic writers in the past. See http://www.fanhistory.com/wiki/Cease_and_desist_letters for more on this.

[6] One might draw comparisons between this and copyright as it relates to the right to mine text and data https://www.jisc.ac.uk/guides/text-and-data-mining-copyright-exception. This right, for "computational analysis only" when the data has been legally accessed, was only instituted in 2014.

clarify the legal position of fanfiction. The projected impact of this study where this issue is concerned is that it will hopefully map both the attitudes of fans towards copyright law and the legal status of fanworks; and that it will also help assess the need for a reformation of current legal frameworks for intellectual property in a heavily networked and mediated society.

1.7.2. Publishing

The relationship of publishing to fanworks is very much tied to that of copyright, as the creation of fanworks takes place in the nebulous space between professional and amateur production. Traditionally, the 'publication' of fanworks has been through small and amateur presses, private printing and the fanzine circuit (c.f. Bacon-Smith 1992). These practices have been augmented by new digital and e-publishing technologies which are also challenging old publishing models in a wider context. Many fanfiction stories published on the internet take on a distinctly professional quality, not merely in writing quality, but also in presentation (Garcia 2016).

There is also something of a tradition of fanfiction writers moving to professional authorship[7], particularly in the science fiction and fantasy genres (Bay 2014; Pugh 2005). This is accomplished either through the publication of the author's original fiction, or through a process of 'filing off the serial numbers', wherein writers remove any reference to the source text from their fanfiction for mainstream publication. This practice has received considerable attention recently due to the success of E. L. James' *Fifty Shades of Grey* trilogy – which was originally a fanfiction based on Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* saga, formerly called *Master of the Universe* (Peckosie and Hill 2015). Peckosie and Hill chart the novel's non-traditional route to mainstream publication, from a hugely popular posting on Fanfiction.net, to independent press publication after having the 'serial numbers filed off', and finally to conventional

[7] Professionally published fiction is termed *profic* (a contraction of 'professional fiction') amongst fans, thus creating a counterpoint to *fanfic* (the shortened term for 'fanfiction').

publication with Vintage Anchor, which was pushed forward by a groundswell of active support, online promotion and positive reviews from fans of the original story. Whilst not critically acclaimed, *Fifty Shades* was a commercial success, bringing the fannish practice of writing fanfiction to the attention of the mainstream media, as well as, perhaps, bestowing a certain level of mainstream acceptance of fanfiction that had not existed before.

One thing that can be certain is that fanfiction is popular, and publishing houses have begun to recognise an untapped market for it (Edidin 2014). Some indie publishing houses are actively recruiting fanfic writers (Edidin 2014); whereas Amazon has opened a new platform, Kindle Worlds, where fans can write and publish their fanfiction for profit – albeit only for certain franchises whose rights-holders have given a license for such activities[8], and without the participative aspects and freedom of expression found in 'traditional' fanfiction communities (Vadde 2017; van Veh 2013).

Aside from this, there are also fanfic writers who are self-publishing their own work via sites such as Lulu.com and selling them online (see, for example, Nichols 2008). This practice, of dubious legality, is not common, and is even frowned upon by some fans (Jones 2014a), but it highlights the changing attitudes to the publication and dissemination of fanworks in a world where the digital tools to do so are globally available and easy to use and access. It is still unclear how the publishing industry will respond to these new practices in the long-run, but this new strand of DIY culture (see Gauntlett 2011) – a fan-based one – may conceivably help spawn a new publishing paradigm, one born from new approaches to copyright, as well as movements such as open access.

1.7.3. Media industry

Fandom is intrinsically tied to the media industry, and one might argue that without that industry fandom might well not exist, at least not in the form we know it today. There can

[8] For more information on Kindle Worlds, see http://www.amazon.com/gp/feature.html?docId=1001197421 [Accessed 31 July 2015].

be no fans without the media products that spawned them. There can be no Trekkers, Beliebers or Potterheads without *Star Trek*, Justin Bieber, or *Harry Potter*. The media industry has always been aware of the power of attracting a following to a product or a franchise, equating it with four types of power – economic, cultural, political and psychological (for more on this, see ch. 7 of Jenkins 2006a). This 'media imperialism' allows for little agency on the side of the consumer, and little dialogue between the producer and consumer of that media. The consumer is essentially passive, broadcast to by a monolithic media in a strict top-down flow. This notion is problematic, as evidenced by the early works on fandom such as Lewis (1992), Jenkins (2013 [1992]), and Bacon-Smith (1992), which describe the ambiguous relationship audiences can have with industry producers and their products, and the manner in which they negotiate with media texts.

In more recent years, this relationship has become more complicated with the read-write culture of the internet and Web 2.0, which has allowed audiences more opportunity to 'answer back' to media producers in ways, and with a volume, that was not possible before. Power is no longer "concentrated in the hands of a few publishers and networks" (Jenkins 2006a, p.180) – at least, not to the extent that it used to be. Jenkins (2006b) posited the idea of *convergence culture* to explain this new 'democratisation' of media consumption, explaining:

> By convergence, I mean the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behaviour of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want (p.2).

This move towards spreadable, cross-platform media is changing the ways in which consumers approach entertainment, allowing for a more immersive style of consumption that 'washes over' much of their daily lives. But it also affords the opportunity to engage those media directly, whether through blogging, reviewing, voting, and the remediation of cultural artefacts into fanworks. This is an era where the media industries have more channels than ever through which to engage larger and larger audiences, and yet, while they "understand

that culture is becoming more participatory, that the rules are being rewritten and relationships between producers and their audiences are in flux […few…], however, are willing to take what may be seen as substantial risks with potentially valuable intellectual property" (Jenkins, Ford, and Green 2013, loc. 773).

Jenkins (2006b) has also noted that the biggest challenge, both to media industries and to media consumers, is the "shift from individualized and personalized media consumption toward consumption as a networked practice" (p.244). The meaning of this is still being negotiated between the producer and audience, and whilst the playing field is being levelled somewhat, it is still unclear how this shift will play out in the long-term. What this thesis proposes to explore is the ways in which fan attitudes and (participatory) practices towards the creation, dissemination, access to and preservation of both official works and fanworks has any relevance to the ways in which media industries may approach, engage and cater to their audiences both in the present and in the future.

1.7.4. Education

The participatory aspects of fan culture and fan communities have brought to light the collaborative activities that many fans engage in. This can be in the form of kickstarters and crowdfunding (Bennett, Chin and Jones 2015), crowdsourcing fan wikis (Busse and Gray 2011), and working collaboratively on fanworks such as fanfiction (e.g. Pugh 2005). Pugh (2005, ch. 6) does indeed go into great detail describing these collaborative activities, discussing practices such as *beta-reading* (the editing and proofreading of fanfiction), the setting up of information resources such as tutorials, transcripts and newsletters, and running amateur awards, contests or competitions.

Subsequent research has looked into the educational benefits of these participatory activities. One of the major proponents of using fandom as a motivator in an educational setting is Rebecca Black, who has argued for the use of popular culture in classrooms, especially as a way of engaging students who are learning English as a second language. In her

research, Black (2009; 2008) has found that young writers from all over the world are learning to write English through authoring fanfiction, and that their passion for their fandom drives learning in a way that traditional teaching models cannot. This ties in to new models of (digital) literacy in the 21st century which include more participative and student-led models of learning:

> The challenge then, is thinking of ways to make our classrooms more open to […] new literacies […] This might involve creating class room environments that emphasize inquiry-based, participatory forms of learning in which students are encouraged to explore alternative interpretations of literature and classroom materials, much as they explore alternative interpretations of media through their fanfiction texts. Activities would, of course, require expert guidance by teachers; however, in keeping with the ethos of new literacies and 21st-century proficiencies, they also would involve deal a great of collaborative learning among students and would stress the importance of accessing, evaluating, and integrating knowledge across available on- and offline sources (Black 2009, p.696).

Both Black and other scholars such as Gee and Hayes (2010), Edfeldt, Fjordevik and Inose (2012), Booth (2015a), Lammers (2016), and Marcon and Faulkner (2016) acknowledge the importance of these new proactive, reciprocal and porous forms of teaching, where knowledge is shared and negotiated through peer-learning, and the presence of the teacher is to facilitate and guide the process rather than to lead and dominate it. Edfeldt, Fjordevik and Inose (2012), Jenkins (2006b), Pugh (2005), and Black (2008; 2009) have all noted the ways in which fans, wishing to undertake new skills, will self-segregate into novice-mentor roles and nurture bonds similar to expert-apprentice relationships wherein the less experienced partner will follow the guidance and tutelage of the veteran for a period of time before becoming conversant enough in the skills being learned to no longer need support, and perhaps to go on to mentoring others themselves.

This is not merely limited to creative writing; Gee and Hayes (2010) have also seen this practice in reference to fan game modding, where the skills being learned are digital and computer literacies, including programming, coding, 3D imaging and so on. Gee and Hayes (2010) call these groups of fans (mostly, but not exclusively, comprised of young adults)

'passionate affinity groups', groups whose members are so engrossed in a specific interest, that they are enabled and motivated to engage in what they call 'deep learning' – learning that sticks, and that can also be life-changing in terms of confidence, self-worth and transferable skills. Indeed, Booth (2015a) has argued for fandom and fan studies as a method for teaching students how to participate in "today's intellectual, knowledge and creative economies" (3.2), asserting that current, top-down forms of learning are outmoded and geared towards a now obsolete industrial society.

It is hoped that, through the empirical work of this study, more insight will be able to be gleaned on the ways in which fans help, support and educate one another in the creation of fanworks and other fan-related artefacts, and this may inform new, participative models in formal education:

> When students are learning […] they rarely get to mod the curriculum, design things for the curriculum, and produce knowledge themselves. These are all things that many young people do get to do, and expect to be able to do, in their popular culture. Surely, such proactive production would aid in real problem solving and innovation, two major aspects of preparing students for the twenty-first century (Gee and Hayes 2010, p.174).

1.7.5. Library and information professions

Since the work of Savoleinan (1995) and his framework of Everyday Life Information Seeking (ELIS), and the work of Stebbins (2001) and his Serious Leisure Perspective, there has been more attention paid in recent years to non-work information behaviours, and a growing interest in the hobbyist domain (Case 2012). Case highlights several studies in this domain, and notes several areas in which hobbyist information behaviour appears to deviate from that in professional, work, or paid domains (2012, pp.336-338). These include:

- The intensity of voluntary information activities is similar to that seen in paid work.
- The importance of reciprocal information sharing between community members.
- Downplaying the information seeking of individuals.

- Downplaying formal sources of information.
- The psychological benefits of these activities.
- Possible problems with folksonomic tagging (e.g. on Flickr).

These are important because they suggest that information behaviour is heavily reliant on *context* (i.e. information behaviour is markedly different in work and non-work contexts); and that away from professional networks, information users develop non-professional or amateur strategies for dealing with information (e.g. going to informal sources, developing folksonomies, and the communal sharing of information). These amateur forms of information work are becoming more conspicuous in a world where use of Web 2.0 is becoming more prevalent on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Amazon, YouTube, and so on. On sites such as these it becomes evident that millions of people are engaging in amateur information practices every day; yet there has been little research done on user studies in this area within LIS. Notable exceptions are Cox, Clough and Marlow (2008) on Flickr; Adams (2009) on an online virtual world, *City of Heroes*; Skov (2013) on online museum visitors; Wyatt et al (2013) on social media in general; Saxton and Ghosh (2016), and Scolere and Humphreys (2016) on the social curation undertaken on Pinterest; and Bullard (2014) on an online fanfiction repository. In the view of the author, it is important to research these amateur online communities for the following reasons:

- Non-work related information behaviour is part of our everyday lives, and it is vital that LIS understand this relatively neglected domain that is so intrinsic to everyday online activities;
- With the GLAM sector eager to encourage the participation of the public in crowdsourcing projects such as Transcribe Bentham, Galaxy Zoo, and the World Archives Project (Westberg Gabriel and Jensen 2017; Enis 2015; Atkinson 2011), it is important to understand what motivates and inspires the passion of the public to participate at all;

- LIS needs to better understand how to design services for the use of these amateur or non-work information users (Blandford and Attfield 2010);
- LIS needs to better understand what type of collections these non-professional information users are interested in and how they contribute to them.

Fans, as we have seen, are heavy users of the internet (Jenkins 2006a) and prolific users of social media (Bore and Hickman 2013; Highfield, Harrington and Bruns 2013; Hills 2013, etc.). One might also consider them to exemplify hobbyists in that their activity is focused around a certain subject or domain, and that their behaviour is equally (if not more) passionate, even to the point of being pathologised in the press (Jenson 1992; Hills 2002; Elkington, Jones and Lawrence 2006). But what also marks fans out as particularly worthy of study in this context is the way in which they collaboratively organise, disseminate and share fan-related information, but, more importantly, the unique manner in which they remediate, recycle, reuse and redistribute official texts in the creation of sometimes high quality fanworks. This is especially interesting because it implies a creative agency of the information user that is rarely seen in LIS user studies; and it also gives the impression of a cyclical use of information sources to add to a constant work-in-progress that becomes the 'fan text'.

The research in this study hopes to explore and clarify these practices in order to better understand and cater to the information needs of fans.

1.7.6. Summary

The impact areas detailed above can be mapped onto the aims and objectives of this thesis as stated on p.9. The relationships between the impact areas and the aims and objectives are depicted in the table below.

Objective	Area of impact
1. To better understand the information behaviour of a unique group of people and therefore to improve planning for information services and/or architectures.	**1.** Library and information professions
2. To investigate fanwork collections, their place as cultural products, and how fans create, disseminate, promote, organise, access and preserve them.	**1.** Library and information professions **2.** Copyright **3.** Publishing
3. To explore whether fan information behaviour can be generalised to, and whether it can inform, other domains, including LIS, the publishing and media industries, education, and copyright law.	**1.** Copyright **2.** Publishing **3.** Media industry **4.** Education

Table 1: Impact areas linked to thesis objectives.

2. PART TWO – Literature review

2.1. Definitions

This section gives context to the literature review by defining what is meant by fans and fan communities. An historical overview of fans is discussed, moving onto the changing landscape of fandom in the 21st century. Subsequently, fan communities are defined through a broad discussion of community, through to narrower types which are of relevance to this research – online communities, genre communities, and discourse communities. Finally, fan communities are discussed.

2.1.1. Defining fans

Over the past twenty years or so, the question of what is, and what it means to be, a fan has been undergoing a slow but steady change. This is due in part to the advent of the internet going mainstream, which has allowed fans and their associated fandoms to become far more visible and interconnected than ever before.

The 'traditional' view of the fan as a maladjusted obsessive living in their parents' basement (e.g. Jenson 1992) is still something of a stereotype in our modern Western culture, despite these changes. Lewis (1992) and Jenkins ([1992] 2013) – writing about fandom on the cusp of the internet revolution during the early- to mid-1990's – talked about a community very much interconnected through the *physical* world – that is, through people who communicated mostly via analogue channels and met once or twice a year at conventions. These conventions served (and still serve) as a contact point for fans, where they could discuss their fandom with other like-minded people, share their creative output, and participate in other fan-related activities (e.g. organise fan clubs or petitions). Whilst the fan convention is still very much a part of the fan community, much of its associated activities have been taken over by the internet, as have those activities that were once very much performed in the analogue world.

For example, fanfiction – which previously would have been Xeroxed and passed between fans – is now largely published digitally; as are fan vids, which previously would have been copied and circulated manually (and whose quality would therefore have degraded over time), and are now widely available on sites such as YouTube (Coppa 2006). The affordances of the internet have allowed fans to explore new methods of fannish behaviour (such as Wiki creation); it has also drastically reduced the amount of effort needed to create and disseminate fan-related cultural objects. Because of this, many more fans are attracted to the more overt, public activities associated with fandom; and, by the same token, many more fans are able to access fan-related output than ever before. The gap between producer and audience has been narrowed. Where before a fan artist might have trouble getting her work seen, now it is simply a matter of uploading an image file to a website; where once a fan might have found it difficult to come into contact with other fans, a simple search on Google will now provide them with endless options on where to go to find like-minded people.

However, this surfeit of access opportunities does create problems of definition for the researcher. It is perhaps telling that the seminal studies in fandom are now over 20 years old (e.g. Bacon-Smith 1992; Jenkins [1992] 2013; Lewis 1992; Penley 1992), and it is worth considering that these studies refer to a time before the internet became commonly used as an information technology in everyday life.

2.1.1.1. Historical attempts to define fans

Fiske, in Lewis' edited text *The Adoring Audience* (1992), was perhaps the first to attempt a systematic definition of fans; when he did so he categorised them mainly in terms of their *productivity*. He saw fans as engaged in three 'levels' of productivity – *semiotic*, *enunciative* and *textual*. *Semiotic productivity* is essentially meaning-making behaviour – how identity and experience is formed through the "semiotic resources of the cultural commodity"; although Fiske is careful to remind us that this practice is not the sole preserve of fan culture, but of popular culture at large. *Enunciative productivity* is the circulation of this semiotic,

sense-making output in face-to-face interactions which Fiske likens to an "oral culture". This circulation of "fan talk" reflects the meanings fans attach to the artefacts of their fandom, meanings which go towards building a more coherent community and a wider fan culture.[9]

Lastly, *textual productivity* refers to the creative and artistic productions which fans engage in, such as fanfiction, fanart, vidding etc. Fiske highlights the often high production values of these cultural artefacts, and the effort, dedication and passion channelled into these works by people who are largely amateurs indulging in free labour. Thus Fiske's cultural economy of fandom provides a sort of hierarchy of productive output through which it is possible to categorise fans themselves.

Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) would later use Fiske's work to build a more up-to-date model. Their work posited that audiences of cultural texts or activities exist on a continuum which included *consumers, fans, cultists, enthusiasts* and *petty producers.*[10] Their model particularly focuses on the fan, cultist and enthusiast categories, and makes relatively fine distinctions between the three (see Tables 2 and 3). Consumers, according to them, are mainly engaged in the consumption of cultural artefacts; petty producers have made the leap from amateur enthusiast to full-time producers as a kind of occupation (for example, a classic car fan who does up vehicles to resell on the market). Abercrombie and Longhurst consider the petty producer as driven by markets and as more akin to the consumer in that their activities are based on more "general capitalist social relations" (p.140).

[9] Fiske does, however, note that enunciative productivity may also take non-enunciative forms, such as Madonna fans dressing up as their idol (1992, p.38).

[10] Abercrombie and Longhurst make fine distinctions between fans, cultists and enthusiasts, yet acknowledge that many of their individual traits come under the broader term of 'fan'. In fact, they agree that their cultists "are closer to what much of the recent literature has called fan". Indeed, many scholars of fan studies do not generally make these distinctions (see, for example, Hills 2002), and therefore, in this thesis, the term 'fan' is used to describe Abercrombie and Longhurst's fans, cultists *and* enthusiasts respectively.

	Fan	**Cult**	**Enthusiast**
Object	Star/programme	Specialized star/programme	Activity
Media	Heavy	Heavy but specialized	Specialized
Organization	None	Loose	Tight

Table 2: Fans, cultists and enthusiasts (Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998).

Consumer—Fan–Cultist–Enthusiast—Petty Producer

Table 3: Abercrombie and Longhurst's audience continuum (1998).

In terms of Fiske's cultural economy of fan production, Abercrombie and Longhurst divide their 'fan types' mainly by enunciative and textual production. In their estimation, fans, cultists, enthusiasts and petty producers all engage in textual production to varying degrees, whereas consumers are "involved in 'textual production' in talk" (p.148) – in other words in enunciative production. Hence, it would seem that the main difference between the consumer and the fan (that is cultists and enthusiasts as well as fans) is that the fan is engaged in the production of material artefacts, whilst consumers restrict themselves in the main to 'fan talk'.

For the most part, Bacon-Smith (1992) and Jenkins ([1992] 2013) choose not to define fans through academic models, preferring to let fans self-identity as such. However, Hills (2002), highlighted the difficulties of such an approach, for 'fan' is a fluid term, even amongst fans themselves. Self-identified fans may in fact show very little emotional attachment to the object of their so-called fandom, and thus might not be considered fans at all according to a more rigorous model. Thus the subjectivity of self-identifying renders the label meaningless in an academic sense.

Hills (2002) was the first to point out the pitfalls in treating fans and fandoms as 'things' that can thus become the 'object of study' and consequently be analysed. He warns that it is the very fluidity of fandom and fans, their plasticity across the cultural landscape, their performative natures, and the self-reflexiveness and defensiveness of some self-identifying fans, that all necessarily contribute to the futility of pigeon-holing either into strictly-defined categories.

2.1.1.2. Defining fans in the 21st century

Whilst the previous models are still in some measure relevant today (i.e. in terms of analysing the productive behaviour of fans), Busse and Gray (2011) suggest that it is perhaps time to reframe our concept of fans and fandoms *since* the popularisation of the internet. The aforementioned convergence of fans and non-fans has largely changed the goalposts in terms of what it means to be (or not to be) a fan. With a world now interconnected by the World Wide Web, where information is readily available to anyone who knows how to use a browser, the world of fandom is increasingly at the fingertips of the everyman. One may easily find out the latest gossip on a TV show such as *The Walking Dead*, read articles about it on a news aggregator, find out information about the characters or storylines on wikis, and discuss and analyse it on dedicated online fora or message boards. The question is – can a person who engages in such activity be considered a fan?

In casual conversation, such a person may define themselves as a 'fan of *The Walking Dead*'; but then, what do we call the people, who, for example, actually *write* the *Walking Dead* fanfiction? Are they something *more* than a fan?

Busse and Gray (2011) discuss the point that the internet has made it increasingly difficult to differentiate between what might be called a casual fan and a dedicated fan:

> …many casual fans may visit a wiki, and some may even add material and thus create user content, but it still requires someone more dedicated to provide server space, maintain the wiki, and assure its continuance. Fan film, machinima, and vids may be watched by thousands

> on Youtube.com, but a much smaller band of fans actually dedicates the significant time and creative energy needed to make such films (pp.431-432).

Hills (2013) agrees, regarding the theories of Fiske and Abercrombie and Longhurst as rather simplistic, especially in an era where "digital fandom collapses semiotic and enunciative productivity into hybridized or generalized textual productivity" (p.150). In other words, 'fan talk' – largely verbal in Fiske's day – has seen a radical shift from the verbal to digital, non-face-to-face platforms. Verbal enunciative productivity, of course, has not 'disappeared'; but Hills sees the digital as having, to a large extent, dissolved the semiotic and enunciative into a more generalized form of textual productivity. Therefore, he surmises, it is time to seek a new paradigm to explain the concept of fan productivity as a whole.

Hills (2013) also criticises Jenkins' theory of participatory culture for being too broad in an age where Web 2.0 has afforded participatory activities on a wide range of levels to a large swathe of users; coupled with which, participatory activities have had a "long history in political theory, human geography, sociology, and design" quite apart from fandom (Wyatt et al 2013). Hills draws on the work of Schäfer (2011) to construct a bipartite model of participatory culture which is more relevant:

EXPLICIT	The production of cultural artefacts by social groups which constructs and is constructed by group identity
IMPLICIT	The production of content which is not necessarily in the context of fan-based community

Table 4: Table depicting Hills' (2013) proposed bi-partite model of participatory culture.

This is supported by Busse and Gray (2011), and Wyatt et al (2013), who also see fannish activities as taking place on a continuum, and remind us that such activities are not always the works of creativity so valorised by Jenkins and others. It is worth then, not merely distinguishing fans as being uniquely engaged in participatory cultures; nor to focus on those fans which engage in 'traditional' forms of textual production such as fanfiction and fanart, as

textual production of all types (e.g. writing wikis, guides, reviews or even comments) are part of the digital landscape of both fan *and* non-fan communities alike.

The question of *what is a fan* in the 21st century is therefore not easily answered – nor is it the remit of this thesis to engage in a prolonged debate about what exactly constitutes a fan. It would be fair to say, however, that the casual fan acts more as a consumer – reading articles about their favourite novel or searching for photomanips (or simply *manips* – digital manipulations of photographic stills) of characters in their favourite movie. It is, however, the *dedicated* fan that is of more interest to the outcomes of this study – that is, those fans who *write* the article on their favourite novel, or *create* the photomanips depicting characters from their favourite movie. These fans might be considered *producers* – creators of information, knowledge and other cultural artefacts related to a fandom. Or, they may be considered *produsers* (Bruns 2008; 2006) – consumers *and* producers – who consume a source text (e.g. a novel, movie, TV show, comic book, etc.), and *use or remediate* it to produce related but often widely divergent media. Dedicated fans take the time to maintain wikis, administrate online forums and message boards, and mentor like-minded fans who are novices (or *newbies*) into a particular fandom.

It is thus difficult to delineate fans from non-fans, since their behaviour is wide-ranging and their emotional connection to a particular fandom takes on a vast variety of forms; and most people, at some point, engage in low-level fan-related activities. Obviously, both casual and dedicated fans engage in information behaviour – one group must seek it out, the other must create it. Many do both. Dedicated fans are still active information seekers, even if they become information aggregators and creators. Casual fans sometimes make the leap into more dedicated fans, and indeed, some dedicated fans 'leave' a fandom, for various reasons. There is no strictly linear pathway to 'becoming' a fan. The situation is far more complex than that, with many fans straddling boundaries between dedicated and casual, or dipping in and

out of both phases at different times of their lives. In this case the concept of being a fan can be seen as cyclical.

Busse and Gray (2011) do not strictly define fans into two opposing camps, but, roughly speaking, they do assign particular characteristics to casual and dedicated fans that are useful to keep in mind, and which have been represented in Table 5.

	"Casual" fans	***"Dedicated" fans***
Outlook	"Fandom-is-just-a-goddamned-hobby"	"Fandom-is-a-way-of-life"
Community	Visit; add to	Add to; provide service; maintain
Output	Engage with (e.g. watch, read, look at)	Make; create

Table 5: Table depicting differing characteristics of casual and dedicated fans, Busse and Gray (2011).

Whilst this thesis does not necessarily attempt to delineate the concept of 'fan' per se, it does, however, seek to investigate the more complex informational behaviours of what Busse and Gray might class as dedicated fans – that is, those fans that remediate fan-related information into other cultural forms (e.g. *fanworks*). That is not to say that the information behaviours of casual fans are not taken into consideration; indeed, their information behaviours are often intrinsically tied to the consumption of those fanworks, and if they choose to further remediate the objects of their consumption that would, by Busse and Gray's analysis, transform them into dedicated fans. This thesis aims, in part, to glean a better understanding of the *cyclical* models of information behaviour that fans appear to engage in – the use of information by dedicated fans in the creation of fanworks and other fannish activities; and the engagement that other fans (both casual and dedicated) have with those fanworks.

Looking at what might be called the *information behaviour life cycle* of fans therefore requires a more rounded approach to defining fans, and in turn this study does not intend to define fans as such, but rather to focus on their information behaviour. In this light, the thesis

will make use of the distinction between *dedicated* and *casual* fans, as outlined by Busse and Gray (2011) (see Table 5), inasmuch as it will be used as a comparison point between the information behaviours of two differing types of users.

As a related aside – in this thesis the term 'cult media fans' has been used. This is not a well-defined term; De Kosnik (2016a) admits that one can "define 'cult' by some subjective notion of commitment or dedication – 'cult' fans being more 'hard-core', more deeply involved in their fan communities, than 'casual' fans" (p.331), a notion that has some parallel with Busse and Gray's (2011) conception of dedicated fans as seen in Table 5. In this thesis it is used in both this sense of intense dedication, and also to differentiate from other types of fans, such as sports fans, music fans, celebrity fans, etc.

2.1.1.3. Summary

The following summary may be presented with regards the above discussion on fans:

Objective	Section 2.1.1. findings
1. To better understand the information behaviour of a unique group of people and therefore better plan information services and/or architectures.	• Fans are not homogenous, and their levels of engagement in participatory fan cultures may mark them out as either casual or dedicated (Busse and Gray 2011). Dedicated fans are, for the most part, the subject of this thesis. • Fan identity is fluid: fans do not consistently identify as casual or dedicated in their behaviour throughout their lifetime, and may display differently levels of dedication to different fandoms. Fan identity might therefore be considered *cyclical* (Busse and Gray 2011).
2. To investigate fanwork collections, their place as cultural products, and how fans create, disseminate, promote, organise, access and preserve them.	• The participatory cultures of fans are *explicit* (Hills 2013), in that they are involved in the creation of cultural artefacts that both construct and are constructed by group identity – as with genre. • Dedicated fans tend to be *produsers* (Bruns 2008; 2006): that is, they consume a cult media text and use it to produce new cultural artefacts (commonly termed *fanworks*).

Table 6: Summary of section 2.1.1. findings, linked to thesis objectives.

2.1.2. Defining fan communities

The idea of 'community' is one that is fraught with difficulty, and the nebulous quality of the concept is one that has been widely discussed in the fields of sociology and anthropology (Jensen 2012; Miller 2011). Much of the difficulty comes from the fact that the term itself has been attributed many differing definitions by scholars from many different disciplines, and indeed, its use by the everyday layman may refer to more than one concept.

In the sociological sense, 'community' was classically defined by sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies ([1887] 1955), who assigned to it the German word *gemeinschaft*; a word which has no straightforward translation into English. Since Tönnies' seminal text, various definitions have been put forward over the past 100 years or so, with Hillery (1955) famously drawing up a list of 94 definitions for the word.

There is, however, no general consensus, and in more recent times the concept has been further complicated due to the greater mobility of the world's population from rural to urban areas, coupled with the defragmentation of the nuclear family. Thus, the traditional perception of what community is has shifted over the decades, and there are some who contend that this traditional view is nothing more or less than a nineteenth century idyll (Miller 2011; Burrow 2002).

The debate around community has taken another twist due to the rise of the internet and the World Wide Web, and the notion of the 'virtual community' has become popular in recent years; yet the idea that communities *can* exist in non-physical spaces is hotly contested (for an in-depth discussion, see Miller and Horst 2012; and Miller 2011), and this fact, coupled with the already fraught history of how to define physical, 'real world' communities, demands that one treads carefully when applying the term 'community' to groups on the internet. At the very least, it demands that the researcher cautiously consider what is meant by the term when it is used.

First, let us consider the history of community as a sociological concept. The term appears to have been born in the late nineteenth century, when sociology as a discipline first arose, and largely reflected the idea of 'group-ness' as opposed to the idea of isolation and the individual, (Burrow 2002). This was in response to the rapid and unsettling urbanisation of the time, a by-product of the Industrial Revolution, and the mass-migration of rural workers into the ever-expanding city metropolis. This led to the fragmentation of many close-knit rural communities as their members sought jobs and security in the largely anonymous urban sprawl.

Tönnies was the first to define these dichotomous concepts of group-ness and isolation in the terms *gemeinschaft* (translated as 'community') and *gesellschaft* (loosely translated as 'society' or 'association'). The former represented the pre-modern rural village, a group characterised by the local and the intimate ties between the members of that space. The latter is characterised by the network and the essentially anonymous relationships that develop in large cities. The implication was that the intrinsic sense of belonging that was felt in the traditional *gemeinschaft* had disintegrated and given way to a society of closeted individuals. Indeed, *gesellschaft* is a troublesome term, and Burrow reminds us that Tönnies had a wider definition in mind than the simple translations of 'society' or 'association' can express: "Gesellschaft is, of course, the German for business corporation, and as a paradigm case it will do, but Tönnies intends it more widely; it includes for him, for example, the modern state" (p.119). Indeed, Vincent Miller (2011), in his analysis of digital culture, stresses the fact that, due to the irrevocable tide of globalisation throughout the twentieth century, the idea of the nation state as community came to dominate the individual's focus of communal feeling and sense of belonging. In many ways the nation state can be considered the *gesellschaft* writ large, an imagined community in which no one member will ever be able to know all of his fellows, but who instead feels bound to them through shared cultural and "symbolic resources" (p.187).

The idea of *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* is essentially an idea of 'places and spaces', of the physical locality as a defining characteristic of human social relationships. But this concept of 'community' as a spatial construct, Miller argues, was eventually replaced by that of an *imagined* construct based upon shared cultural values and artefacts throughout the length of the twentieth century. Locality is no longer considered a boundary to community-building; globalisation, the broadcast media, and new information flows (Lash 2002) have afforded the opportunity to connect with people that we would otherwise never meet face-to-face.

This, of course, leads us to another, more recent iteration of the imagined community – that is, the online community.

2.1.2.1. Online communities

If the concept of 'community' has had a chequered history, then that of the online community[11] is even more fraught. Scholars such as Rheingold ([1993] 2000) view the online community as a positive extension of the physical world, of the migration from the spatial to the imagined; one where people who were previously isolated in *gesellschaft*-type populations are able to make meaningful connections with one another via digital technologies – in other words, joining online communities is a way of compensating for a lack of a sense of belonging in the outer world, in Tönnies' modern state. Rheingold, who uses the moniker of 'virtual communities', defines them thus:

> Virtual communities are social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on [...] public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace ([1993] 2000, p.xx).

Rheingold sees these communities as fora for wider political discussion, education and activism, an empowering platform for people to extend the experiences, needs and predilections of everyday life into a digital facsimile of 'real' society. His contention is that

[11] Also variously called digital, electronic, internet or virtual communities. For the sake of clarity, and for reasons further discussed below, the term 'online community' is maintained throughout this thesis.

there is nothing inherently ominous about the digital, nor is it appropriate to think of the digital as somehow other-wordly or escapist: "People in virtual communities do just about everything people do in real life, but we never leave our bodies behind" (p.xvii).

However, scholars such as Turkle (2011)[12] are doubtful that these online groups can be considered 'real' communities, and are of the opinion that they are ultimately detrimental to and distract from 'real-world' communities and relationships:

> Communities are constituted by physical proximity, shared concerns, real consequences, and common responsibilities […] What do we owe to each other in simulation? (p.239).

Turkle and others essentially consider the Web as offering a replacement or substitute for what one may lack in the physical world, an exact copy of 'real' experiences, feelings and relationships that are less meaningful because they can be 'switched off', that are unreal in the sense that we can choose to stop being responsible for those emotions and relationships whenever we tire of them. Those of Rheingold's standpoint, however, would argue that online communities are more 'authentic' inasmuch as their members *choose* to belong to them and are bonded together by a common interest, rather than simply being tied to a group via locality, familial relations or a mere accident of birth. Such communities are brought together by a *freedom of engagement* (Miller 2011), which affords members a greater amount of autonomy than they may be accustomed to in their everyday lives. This allows them to dip in and out of a group whenever they feel so inclined, to create their own rules and norms, and to build relationships as they see fit. Miller, however, does not accept that all such groups are uniformly positive – for every online community that is a success, there are several more that do not find the impetus to survive and thus fall by the wayside. There are also the kinds of problems that one finds most touched upon in the media – for example, cyber-bullying, flame wars, trolling, and other forms of harassment. Far from being utopian, online communities

[12] Perhaps ironically, Turkle was once an advocate of the former position, discussing the internet as a positive space for the construction of interest-based communities in her book *Life on the screen: identity in the age of the internet* (1995), New York: Touchstone.

suffer from exactly the same kind of problems as 'real-world' ones. It would therefore be wrong to vaunt the online community as being a uniquely perfect or ideal world to live in.

In keeping with the above discussion, Miller and Horst (2012) are careful not to define the digital and the real-world as opposing facets of human culture; or, to be more specific, to cordon off the digital as some renegade and ultimately detrimental new upstart in the long history of sociological discourse on community. Their contention is that the digital is not a dystopian instrument through which human culture as we know it will be eroded. The digital is merely another way we *express* that human culture – it doesn't mean that we as a species are any more or less cultured than before:

> …the digital, as all material culture, is more than a substrate; it is becoming a constitutive part of what makes us human. The primary point of this […] is in resolute opposition to all those approaches that imply that becoming digital has either rendered us less human, less authentic or more mediated. Not only are we just as human in the digital world, the digital also provides many new opportunities […] to help us understand what it means to be human (p.4).

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that scholars have categorised online communities which reflect those of the 'real world'. Armstrong and Hagel (2000) define four types: communities of *transaction* (e.g. goods via eBay and craigslist; information via Wikipedia); communities of *interest* (e.g. online fan clubs); communities of *fantasy* (e.g. *Second Life*, MUDs); and communities of *relationship* (e.g. online dating sites and support networks). All types are of importance throughout the duration of this thesis, as it explores the ways in which fans build online communities through shared *interests*, the impulse to play out *fantasy*, to forge *relationships* with like-minded people, and to structure the resulting networks through the *transaction* of material/digital artefacts and informational goods.

Finally, any discussion of online community cannot be considered complete without an acknowledgement of the participatory culture that has become so much a part of the online, digital world. This culture, explicated more fully by the likes of Jenkins (2006a), Jennings (2007), Beer and Burrows (2010), Shirky (2011) and Gauntlett (2011), is the lifeblood of the

modern networked information economy, bringing together the contributions of decentralised users in ways that were not previously possible through the endeavours of individual persons or even corporations (Bruns 2008; Levy 1999), and turning consumers into active producers. It is this culture which now permeates an interconnected and globalised internet, and subsequently the communities that inhabit it.

2.1.2.2. Online vs. virtual

Throughout the study the term 'online community' will be employed in describing fan groups on the internet, rather than equivalent terms such as electronic, digital or virtual communities, the reason being that the term 'online' encompasses all internet-based structures and activities (whether facilitated by the World Wide Web or not), and yet is precise enough to discount differing forms of community that may be found on, or incorporate, other electronic or digital platforms that do not come into the scope of this study. An example of such communities might be an electronic network tied to an institution whose members comprise a group focused on task-based goals. It is assumed that the term 'online community' can safely avoid connotations with these types of groupings, and yet maintain a broad enough implication to include less obvious forms of online groups (such as Usenet users, mailing lists, web rings and peer-to-peer networks).

The term 'virtual community' has long been popular, being coined in 1993 by Howard Rheingold just as the internet began to become mainstream (see the preceding section). However, here this term has been eschewed, as the word 'virtual' brings with it an implied opposition to 'real', and this is an implication that is to be avoided, as the virtual is not any less real than the physical, and to promote the idea that online communities are somehow 'unreal' or inferior to offline ones is to misrepresent such groups from the outset. As Boellstorff (2012) opines:

> …the virtual is as profane as the physical, as both are constituted 'digitally' in their mutual relationship [… S]ome scholars of the online seem unable to stop referring to the physical as

> the 'real', even though such inaccurate phrasing implies that the online is 'unreal' – delegitimizing their field of study and ignoring how the virtual is immanent to the human (p.42).

This is especially relevant when one considers that much human activity is grounded in the virtual, particularly leisure or 'play' activities – for example, reading a book, watching a film, playing a videogame, or even daydreaming. Indeed, many fan communities, both online and offline, are based upon the pursuit of the virtual in digital (but very real) spaces. This pursuit of the virtual – that is, virtual in terms of *fantasy* – has long been considered one of prime aspects of fan culture, most notably and notoriously in the pathological sense (e.g. Jenson 1992); but also, more recently, in the playful and creative sense (e.g. Pearce 2011; Jenkins 2006a; [1992] 2013; Hills 2002). It is also worth making the connection here to Armstrong and Hegel's (2000) aforementioned communities of fantasy as one of four types of online community, as mentioned above – fantasy is inherently virtual, and just as real.

2.1.2.3. Genre and discourse communities

When considering communities – and fan communities in particular – it is useful to think in terms of genre and discourse. According to Swales (1990), and as stated most simply by Borg (2003) discourse communities are "groups that have goals or purposes, and use communication to achieve these goals" (p.398). Within genre theory, there are two different types of genre – literary genre, and rhetorical genre. Literary genre is, loosely, a classification system based on stylistic criteria, one that is widely associated with the literary or entertainment forms. Rhetorical genre is, on the other hand, a reflection of both society and culture at large, as "a shared set of linguistic and structural features – socially constructed interpretive conventions – that guide both the production and consumption of communication" (Procter, Davenport, McKinlay et al 1998). It is through rhetorical genre that we underpin the actions of our everyday lives, determine our actions in recurring situations and use to signal markers in social interactions.

It was Swales (1990) who first fully explored the connection between discourse communities and rhetorical genre. In order to make sense of and organise their own discourse, "[e]stablished members of discourse communities employ genres to realize communicatively the goals of their community" (p.52). He further went on to establish 6 characteristics of discourse communities, including:

- A set of common goals;
- Mechanisms of intercommunication;
- Use of participatory means to exchange information and feedback;
- Use of one or more genres to communicate its aims;
- Acquisition of a specific lexicon, and;
- The membership of a certain number of people who possess content and discourse expertise.

When one compares these characteristics to (digital) fan groups, it is not hard to see the similarities that they bear to discourse communities. To take Adams' (2009) *City of Heroes* players as an example, this fan community had a set of common goals pertaining to successfully navigating the gamespace, and it was the in-game communication systems (as well as online fora) that they used to discuss plans and strategies for effective navigation. This goal was determined by the genre of the game itself, i.e. an environment where one's avatar must develop a heroic personality based on the player's actions. These groups possessed several 'gatekeepers' or 'experts', players who were known for their extensive knowledge of the game, who would pool information with other members in a participatory fashion. In fact, this kind of information-gathering was preferred amongst gamers (Adams 2009, p.689). This example reiterates how genre is *socially* embedded within discourse communities and develops via "communicative events" (Swales 1990).

Devitt (2004), however, expands on Swales' work by suggesting that his theory – whilst useful – focuses on 'expert' groups in professional, disciplinary and work-related settings[13], and does not give full credit to the experts that populate more informal networks, and who, in fact, move between such networks over the course of a lifetime. Discourse communities and their members are, in Swales' estimation (as Devitt 2004 claims) homogeneous, and this is what Devitt ultimately rejects: for her, Swales' work is more useful in validating already existing groups than explaining the processes of how those groups are born and mature, putting undue emphasis on how discourse constructs groups, rather than on how groups construct discourse. Her assertion is that groups are better defined by shared values, goals and identities than by their discourse; although discourse grows from and supports these shared traits. In refining Swales' work, she posits three types of discourse 'group': the community, the collective, and the network.

Agreeing with Swales, Devitt describes communities as groups of people that come together for prolonged periods of time in intense common endeavours. Nevertheless, she qualifies this by saying that:

> these communities, like physical communities, still contain the heterogeneity of multiple cultures and diverse people, experts and novices, powerful and peripheral members, sycophants and rebels (p.42).

It is also possible for members of a community to belong to *more than one* community, to be proficient in the discourse and genres of many, and to migrate between communities over time. This is in contrast to the *collective*, where groups come together in common interest but without the intensity or frequency of a community, and whose actions are usually temporary and focused; and to the *network*, where discourse is shared *individual to individual* in a web-like configuration, but is not shared collectively and is far more ephemeral.

[13] One might see a similar trend in LIS itself (see section 2.2.3.2).

From all these discourse groups genres are 'born', from *Jane Austen* (a community genre), to *Alcoholics Anonymous* (a collective genre), to the *weather forecast* (a network genre). What is significant about genres is, as Devitt (2004) says, not merely that discourse groups construct them, but that *genres construct discourse groups*:

> The genres that develop from a group's interactions, then, reciprocally reinforce the group's identity and nature by operating collectively rather than individually (p.36).

And:

> It is […] the nature of genre both to be created by people and to influence people's actions, to help people achieve their goals and to encourage people to act in certain ways, to be both-and. Genres never operate independently of the actions of people, but the actions of some people influence the actions of other people through genres (pp.48-49).

This construction of genre shows us how genre is not merely embedded in the community, but how the community is *defined* by genre, and how, in a kind of symbiosis, genre sets may evolve to meet the changing needs of a group as it develops.

We have already seen, above, how a group of fans may fit Swales' (1990) definition of a discourse community, and now it is also clear to see that they also fit Devitt's (2004) estimation of a discourse community (as opposed to a discourse *collective* or *network*), in that their togetherness is predicated upon intense, lengthy and high-quality goal-orientated activities, and that they both define and achieve their goals through the application of genre – generally, in this case, the genre of *cult media*, but specifically through the genre of their own particular fandom.

But we might go one step further, and also consider fan communities as being both creators *of* and created *by* a unique blend of both rhetorical *and* literary genre. This is most clearly seen in fanfiction communities, where genre as a literary form is most visible. Fanfiction, by its nature, follows and is codified into distinct generic forms, such as *slash* (homoerotic fiction), *het* (heteroerotic fiction) and *gen* (general fiction), which are overarching genres, and may be split into further sub-genres such as *first-time*, *hurt/comfort* and *darkfic*.

As Stein (2006) notes, "within fan culture, these terms function as generic discourse that is used to categorize, to distinguish, and to communicate expectations" (p.248). Hence one can see that, as with rhetorical genres, literary genres both inform and are reflected by the social norms of the fan community. One of the most important methods for fanfiction categorisation is by the *pairing* or *ship*, the romantic couple that is represented in the text. This will reflect the couple that the author *ships*, or supports. The significance of pairing within fan communities – one that is reflected heavily in fanworks such as fanfiction (Driscoll 2006) – cannot be understated: "Ships are forceful segmentations of a fandom or fan fiction community, and devoted followers of a ship will often be hostile to any other using of one of their characters" (Driscoll 2006, p.85). The *pairing* genre is thus used as a way in which to demarcate oneself, or one's fan community, from other fans and other fan communities. Likewise, a fan of *fluff* (romantic) fanfiction might use this predilection to identify themselves against fans of *darkfic* (dark fiction, usually involving deaths): or, indeed, they may identify with more than one genre at several points in their fannish lives. In this way "fan fiction is inseparably community and text" (Driscoll 2006, p.92).

However, one might also say that *fandom* itself is inseparably community and text, a large and sprawling worldwide collective of an archontic, *rhizomatic* structure, whose many branches *define* themselves through a complex set of genres, or *genre repertoires* (Devitt 2004, Taylor 2003), which further facilitate the development of group identity. According to Stein (2006), it is through the canon, the fantext, genre discourse, and new technological affordances that the community is able to "focus the process of fantextual creation" (p.249). In this sense, genre is inextricably linked to both community and the process of creation, both informing and informed by community norms.

Perhaps ironically, it is a fan herself, HollyLime (n.d.)[14], who, writing a piece of *meta* (another example of literary genre within fan communities) best describes the role of genre in her own fandom, *Harry Potter:*

> To the *Harry Potter* fan collective, fan fiction is recognizable as a genre set within a larger repertoire of genres used by the fans. That repertoire includes the various forums, discussion, and even artistic methods used exclusively by the *Harry Potter* fandom to further appreciate, analyze, debate and understand the fictional world that unites them all (n.p.).

This finds some support in the LIS literature, although research which draws upon genre theory in this area is sparse. Most of this work has been conducted by Pauline Rafferty, who acknowledges Devitt's point that genre both defines and is defined by community, and who also interestingly makes note of the significance of popular culture within genre, without making specific mention of fandom and fan communities:

> Genre, viewed diachronically, is dialogic, in that there are relationships between texts written at an earlier date and texts written at a later date, and dialectic, in that instantiations of structural codes and conventions in individual texts may over time change generic codes and conventions at what might be termed structural level. When a genre no longer ideologically fits with a society it may wither away or become substantially transformed. Producers of generic cultural products are themselves […] already consumers of the generic cultural products, the production of which they are contributing to. This means that *in popular culture consumption is always of pre-requisite of popular culture production* (Rafferty 2010, p.256; my italics).

In view of this, Rafferty has advocated the use of democratic indexing to classify fiction on user-based websites, allowing the community to freely tag works according to their understanding of the genre it belongs to, after which community experts 'discipline' these terms into more standard forms (Rafferty 2013; 2010), as further discussed on pp.83-84 of this thesis. Whilst earlier research on the concept of collaborative information retrieval informed

[14] HollyLime believes fan communities to be *discourse collectives*, due to the fact they come together "around a single repeated interest" whose actions are "singular and focused" (Devitt 2004). However, I class these as *discourse communities*, since, according to Devitt, collectives come together for short or infrequent periods of time, and their activities lack the intensity, complexity and emotional investment of communities (pp.42-44), and thus do not quite fit the pattern of fan communities as we have discussed them thus far.

by genres began in the 90's (see Procter, Davenport, McKinlay et al 1998), subsequent developments at the time appear to have been hampered by the limitations of Web 1.0 and a focus on virtual/digital libraries tied to institutions – or perhaps a lack of interest. Whilst LIS continues to see comparatively little movement forward in this area, fanfiction repositories have created a successful collaborative curated folksonomy (Bullard 2014) which is informed by genre (both rhetorical and literary), and which incorporates democratic indexing (Hidderley and Rafferty 1997) processes. This is seen most clearly on the Archive of Our Own, which is explored further in Part 5 of this thesis.

2.1.2.4. Fan communities

Discourse on fan community is as complex as it is on community 'proper'. For instance, Busse and Gray (2011) remind us that "there remain central differences between fandom as social community and aggregates of individual fans" (p.431). Thus, speaking of the 'fan community' is simplistic, yet cannot be avoided in the attendant literature. As with other concepts of community explored above, however, a discussion of fan community cannot exist without now talking of it in terms of the 'online' and the 'digital'.

Duffett (2013) describes fan communities in this way:

> While an artist's *fan base* is the collective made of people who feel a connection to him/her, the *fan community* is a physical manifestation of the fan base, a mutually supportive social network of people that can – and do – regularly communicate with each other as individuals (p.244).

This is a generalised definition of fan community, and holds as much for those based in the offline as the online. So is there any appreciable difference between definitions in the two spaces? Much of this has already been discussed in section 2.1.2.1, but suffice it to say that fandom's move to the online has been game-changing, because it has always been symbiotic with technological advance (Busse and Hellekson 2006; Jenkins 2006b). First, technology has engendered the exposure and visibility of fans and fandom. Second, it has increased access to both source and fan texts. Thirdly, it has enabled fans to come together in ways that were not

previously possible. Lastly, it has allowed fans to express their fandom creatively (Duffett 2013).

Fan communities are also subject to the *freedom of engagement* that Miller (2011) ascribes to online communities, and this effect can be seen in, for example, Deller's (2014) longitudinal study of an online Belle & Sebastian fan community, where, over 10 years, fans migrated either to other platforms or to other fandoms, and where some fans opined that "newer Internet spaces have contributed to the community's decline" (p.224). This, it would seem, is endemic to an online culture that is experiencing *convergence* (Jenkins 2006b), wherein content flows easily and fluidly across various platforms and devices. It seems natural to assume that fans would 'chase' such content across platforms and in ways that suit them. Nevertheless, as Miller (2011) and Boellstorff (2012) have also discussed, it is naïve to assume that this protean quality detracts from the 'realness' that fans attribute to these communities and the relationships they form within them – as Sandvoss (2005) notes "there can be little doubt that many fans themselves imagine these networks as a community and equal to other friendship ties" (p.56).

To look now at Armstrong and Hagel's (2000) categories of online community (as discussed in the previous section), one might see that fan communities do not merely fit into any one bracket, but in all of them:

- *Communities of transaction:* Spaces such as Etsy[15], RedBubble[16] and TeeFury[17] are spaces where fanworks can be commodified, sold and bought for actual currency. Fans are also involved in crowdfunding spaces such as Kickstarter[18] and Patreon[19]. Aside from this, fan communities are said to thrive on a gift economy where fanworks are traded and/or freely shared (Duffet 2013; Sokolova 2012; Tushnet 2010).

[15] https://www.etsy.com/
[16] http://www.redbubble.com/
[17] http://www.teefury.com/
[18] https://www.kickstarter.com/
[19] https://www.patreon.com/

- *Communities of interest:* This seems obvious, since by its nature fandom entails the clustering of people around a franchise or source text based on a common interest. However, based on the definition of Armstrong and Hagel (2000) (the sharing of ideas, goods, FAQs, news etc.; i.e. implying no inherent sense of personal connection), this section might better describe the 'low-level' activities of fan communities (Busse and Gray 2011).
- *Communities of fantasy:* Fans come together online in order to perform acts of fantasy and roleplay, such as using Twitter to take on the persona of certain favoured characters (Jeewa and Wade 2015; Bore and Hickman 2013); performing quests and missions on online games (Nyman 2011; Adams 2009); or writing fictional diaries (in character) on LiveJournal (Stein 2006).
- *Communities of relationship:* Whilst the building of relationships may not be the primary objective of joining a fan community, fans can often create deep, meaningful relationships built on intense personal connections (Busse and Gray 2011; Sandvoss 2005).

Further to this, it would be pertinent to add that fan communities also take on features of *communities of play* (Pearce 2011), as examined on p.15 (and which may be linked in terms of similarity to communities of fantasy[20]); and also of *interpretive communities,* as first elucidated by Fish (1980) and further debated by Aden (1999, pp.62-64) and Busse and Gray (2011). These additions also give due attention to the ways in which fans come together, firstly through play, pleasure and enjoyment, and secondly through the individual and collective interpretation of a source text through the negotiation and creation of fan texts.

[20] Whilst related, the concept of *communities of fantasy* is far narrower and perhaps less useful in this context than *communities of play*. Armstrong and Hagel (2000) specifically referred to communities that grow up around online fantasy roleplaying, whereas Pearce's (2011) play communities seem to reference a wider tendency of certain online groups to ludic, or, more properly, paidic activities.

Lastly, it is important not to forget that other significant aspect of online community – participatory culture, which was first proposed by Jenkins ([1992] 2013) in terms of fan community and has become such an integral part of Web 2.0. This has provided new platforms for fans to create, share and disseminate works collaboratively (e.g. Bore and Hickman 2013; Littleton 2011; Adams 2009).

2.1.2.5. Summary

Fan communities may thus be summarised in the following points:

Objective	Section 2.1.2. findings
1. To better understand the information behaviour of a unique group of people and therefore better plan information services and/or architectures.	• Traditional concepts of community as a spatial construct (e.g. Tönnies' *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*) are no longer applicable to new forms of community built around the online and digital networks that are fast becoming integral to our everyday lives (Miller and Horst 2012; Miller 2011). • Four types of online community have been identified: communities of transaction, interest, fantasy and relationship (Armstrong and Hagel 2000). Online fan communities seem to encompass all four types. • Genre has a large part to play in fan discourse, and is central to the formation and sustenance of fan communities in the way that it both informs and fulfils the goals of its members (Driscoll 2006; Devitt 2004; Swales 1990). • Additionally, fans embody other aspects of online and offline community – namely those of play (Pearce 2011), interpretation (Busse and Gray 2011), and participation (Jenkins [1992] 2013).

Table 7: Summary of section 2.1.2. findings, linked to thesis objectives.

2.2. History and context

The purpose of this chapter is to present a review of the literature available on the information behaviour of fans, both within the discipline of library and information science, and of fan studies itself. There is, of course, very little intercourse between these two disciplines, and their epistemological and methodological backgrounds are widely divergent. Therefore, for the benefit of the reader versed in the background of LIS, and to set the context for the literature review, the following sections will deal with a brief history of fandom and of fan studies as a branch of learning. Whilst the information behaviour of fans has not been addressed by the field of fan studies per se, there are diffuse references in the relevant fan studies literature to these behaviours that this chapter aims to piece together, for the first time, into a coherent whole (see section 2.2.3.1). In addition to this, a brief review is given of the literature on fans and fandom *within* information science (such as it is – see section 2.2.3.2).

Discussions of what a fan is, as well as what a fan community is, are also given here. These are important questions in fan studies that should be explored, particularly since this thesis investigates a specific sub-section of fandom (i.e. cult media).

Finally, an evaluation is given of models of information behaviour which are deemed pertinent, in all or part, to the illustration of fan information behaviour, and an assessment is given as to whether any existing model of information behaviour can sufficiently describe the information practices of fans.

For a summary of the research process involved in conducting the literature review, see section 3.3.1.

2.2.1. A brief history of fandom

Despite fan studies being a broad area of research with a vast literature and a wealth of associated material, there has been little effort amongst fan scholars to historicise fandom.

This is because fan scholars have been far more concerned with the social implications of fandom, exploring the subject through ethnographic methods rather than historical ones (Coppa 2006). Whilst such studies might involve an element of historical investigation, there has as yet been a lack of concerted effort in pulling together the histories documented in these disparate threads of research. And yet such an approach might be considered a valuable endeavour, inasmuch as it may lend context to the field of study itself. As Daniel Cavicchi (2009), notes:

> I think there remains a need to more fully historicize the subject of fandom, which will both help us think about its definition and its personal, social, and political functions. I think it is true that there are, already, histories of fan-like behavior, but they are not necessarily intended as such. What historians of fandom might bring to the historical study of popular culture […] is a re-interpretation of the evidence and the historical events through the prism of fan studies. Like any of the micro- histories that seem to be popular these days (the history of walking, the history of salt, etc.), "fandom" is a concept that, when used as a focus, might reveal new layers of meaning that were not evident before (n.p.).

This section does not attempt such an endeavour, which would be a formidable task considering the limited space and current extent of the literature; thus it will suffice here to give a brief overview of the subject[21].

The story of fandom is not as brief as some might imagine. The word 'fan' itself has had a long history, meaning, in the original sense, a fanatic or zealot – usually in a psychological or religious context (Oxford University Press 2015). It was only in the late 19th century that the term came to be applied in the sense we recognise today – that of a passionate enthusiast who avidly follows *something* or *someone*, sometimes to distraction. General consensus would have it that, during the 1880's, 'fan' was first used to describe sports enthusiasts – particularly those who religiously followed American baseball (Shulman 1996). This era would also give birth to the subject of this thesis - cult or media fandom itself can be

[21] For an excellent and concise history of media fandom, see Coppa (2006).

traced back to this time, to the legion of Sherlock Holmes fans who apparently took to the streets upon Arthur Conan-Doyle killing off his hugely popular fictional detective (Brown 2009).

'Fandom' found a new outlet during the 1920's and 30's with the popularisation of science fiction, and dedicated magazines were published which provided fans with a forum to comment and share their opinions via the letters section of these publications. Science fiction fans were thus able to contact one another by reading the letters of like-minded people whose addresses were often printed in the magazines (Coppa 2006; Jenkins 2006a). These fans began to arrange gatherings which soon grew into the large, well-organised national conventions that we know today.

However, Cavicchi (2009) warns us against "mapping 'fandom' onto people and events in the past without justification or with gross distortion". Cavicchi is essentially doubtful whether 'fandom' as it is commonly known today existed before 1900, even though the term 'fan' was in use. The term itself is ambiguous, and its modern use implies an engagement with media and a "degree of audiencing, a realm of marked cultural participation that is always relative to, and defined against 'normal' or unmarked cultural participation" (n.p.). Cavicchi notes that most modern fan scholars define fandom in terms of mass media culture, and thus discuss it in ways that may not be strictly applicable to what might be called 'historical fans'; and although Cavicchi concedes that there may be some overlap between, for example, readers of *Ben Hur* at the turn of the 20th century and the *Lost* viewers of today, until more work is done into the historicisation of fandom, it is not useful to simplify what defines a fan by applying our own modern conceptions onto audiences from the past.

If we are to take the view that modern fandom has its roots in the era of mass media, then we are perhaps to assign its birth to the 1960's and the rise of the cult TV show. General consensus dictates its genesis to *Star Trek*, although some consider it to have been preceded by the slightly earlier *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* (Jenkins [1992] 2013; Busse and Hellekson 2006). Whatever the case, these shows developed large, dedicated followings that continued

to engage with these cultural texts well after they were taken off the air. This new breed of fan did not merely gravitate toward a genre (e.g. sci fi) or a character (e.g. Sherlock Holmes) or a writer (e.g. Jane Austen) that inspired critical and appreciative analysis and discourse. They were the media fan – the *cult* media fan – and tended to respond to the source text in creative and hitherto unseen ways (Coppa 2006). Many members of the sci-fi societies that had built up since the 1920's – mostly women – began to migrate to media fandoms; and these 'new' sci-fi fans, who were more concerned with the sex life of Mr. Spock than in the scientific and technical aspects of the *Star Trek* show, displayed proclivities that many in the original sci-fi communities found disconcerting. Indeed, many traditional sci-fi fans regarded *Star Trek* as unliterary and unworthy of serious attention[22], and thus there occurred a splintering of the original sci-fi fan groups, a splintering that recast fandom into two groups – one based more on the literary aspects of science fiction; the other based on media-generated texts that were considered 'low-brow' (Bacon-Smith 1992). This is important because it serves to illustrate that, contrary to the utopian visions of fandom espoused by scholars such as Jenkins, there is still much tension in the fan community, and the models of positive cultural participation so often touted with regards to fans are not always without conflict, some bitter.

Throughout the 60's, 70's and 80's this rather disparaging view of media fandom, one held even by those who also considered themselves fans, seemed to have been amplified by the passage of time. Fans rarely promoted their activities amongst the non-initiated, and usually met only once or twice a year during specialised conventions (or 'cons'). They communicated via tight-knit underground networks of fanzine ('zine') exchange, amateur or small press magazines that catered to their audience by providing TV show and con-related information, and, more importantly creative works made by other fans that gave expression to their enthusiasm for the primary text. These were produced by non-profit 'circles' (Bacon-Smith 1992), fan editorial boards that made no money from their enterprise; if they were paid,

[22] Coppa reminds us that a similar schism happened about a decade later, when the same stance was taken by *Star Trek* fans themselves towards *Stars Wars* fans.

it was usually only to defray the costs of production. Most distributed at a loss; but this was hardly the point. The creation and dissemination of these texts were largely a creative and social endeavour, a way for fans to communicate, commiserate and share their talents.

It is this *participatory culture*, as first coined by Jenkins in 1992, that began to typify fannish activities during this period. Jenkins first used this term to describe the textual poaching habits of fans, taking de Certeau's (1984) theories of consumers as appropriators of mass cultural artefacts and applying them to the remediating activities of cult fans. *Star Trek* fans would take the source text offered by the original TV series and create their own stories (*fanfiction*) based upon them, exploring characters, plots and worlds that were not fleshed out sufficiently (if at all) during the show's airing. These stories would be Xeroxed and passed round the fan community, as would the aforementioned fanzines. Other fans would create *fanart*; still others would write and even perform songs at fan conventions (a practice known as *filking*). All these activities involved appropriating a source text and reworking it into other, some might consider derivative forms. Derecho (2006), however, rejects the term 'derivative' and proposes calling fanfiction *archontic literature*, choosing to highlight a kinship between cult texts (both primary and fan-created) and an archive which can be built upon indefinitely and remains essentially a work-in-progress. Whatever the case, participatory culture lauds the creative aspects of fandom, celebrating and extolling the fan-as-creator. Under this model fans do not simply regurgitate information provided by the primary text; they rework it, negotiate with it, make sense of it, re-purpose it. They become co-producers of the cult text as well as consumers of it.

Just as fandom appeared to grow from the mass media culture of the 1960's, so it changed with that culture over the following decades. With the rise of MTV and the popular use of home VCR's during the late 1970's and 80's, fans adopted the new technology to create music videos and short films of their chosen texts, setting excerpts from shows like *Star Trek* and *Blakes 7* to commercial songs that expressed emotions, thoughts and concepts the fans

themselves wished to explore, either in the respective characters or the plot as a whole. These practices involved a great deal of technological know-how for the time, and were mostly self-taught (Janissary Collective 2014; Jenkins [1992] 2013; Bacon-Smith 1992). Fans learned through trial and error how to hook up VCR's to their TV, edit and splice scenes together, and add additional sound tracks. Like the homemade fanzines, these vids were copied and distributed amongst the fan community; these analogue copies would often run into several generations, losing a great deal of quality, yet inspiring many fans to create their own vids (see Jenkins [1992] 2013, ch.7).

The next 'chapter' in the history of fandom again blossomed with the advent of new technologies. The 1990's brought with it the mainstream use of the internet via the World Wide Web, and many of its first adopters were fans (Jenkins 2006a), who would congregate on Usenet[23] and Listserv[24] groups or MUDs[25] (Pugh 2005). The affordances of the World Wide Web enabled fans to congregate in larger numbers than were physically possible at 'bricks and mortar' conventions, and potentially from all parts of the globe. Fans who were originally isolated – perhaps living in small communities, or who were unable or unwilling to reach out to other fans – now had the opportunity to join vast digital communities of like-minded people. These Web 1.0 groups came together in dedicated mailing lists or discussion groups (see, for example, chapter 5 of Jenkins 2006a; Baym 1993) where the sharing of gossip, information and creative fanworks could be carried out with far greater synchronicity across a far broader audience.

It was during this period that greater attention began to be paid to fandom as a legitimate field of academic study. It is Henry Jenkins who is generally credited with initiating this new wave of scholarly literature on fandom and fan studies, with his seminal work *Textual*

[23] A kind of electronic bulletin board, wherein users can post messages to a 'newsgroup', usually categorised by subject.
[24] An electronic mailing list, where one could send an email to subscribers on a given list.
[25] 'Multi-User Dungeon', a term to describe electronic, text-based role-playing game, such as *Dungeons & Dragons*.

Poachers, written in 1992. But other researchers in the field were also contributing equally important works at about the same time, notably John Fiske, Camille Bacon-Smith, Constance Penley and Lisa Lewis. Many of these studies pre-empted the internet's explosive debut on the public scene by mere months; nevertheless, they drew attention to the creative aspects of fandom, aspects that disputed the general prejudice that saw fans as 'fanatics' or blind consumers, but rather depicted them as producers in their own right.

Throughout the 1990's and beyond, this fan output proliferated exponentially due to the popularisation of the internet; some fans created 'fansites' dedicated to their favourite popstar, TV show or movie. Many of these sites served as repositories, digital spaces where fans could collect and store information on their fandom of choice. For example, a Madonna fansite could contain a biography, discography, tour listings, image galleries and lyrics, which could then serve as a resource for other fans. Some fansites would join together in 'web rings', which served as a way to group together sites of a similar theme or subject (Hart et al 1999). Like a directory, visitors could browse the web ring, or jump from one site to another, safe in the knowledge that each one they visited would offer more fodder for their fannish desires.

Other sites served as aggregators of fanworks. Examples of these are Fanfiction.net[26], a site which houses thousands of pieces of work from a vast array of different fandoms; and deviantART[27], which offers the same but for fanart. Each site organises fanworks by a complex classificatory system, using categories and terminology very much based in the fan community. These sites are still functioning today and are extremely popular.

The new millennium brought with it the advent of Web 2.0 – and social media has afforded fans another outlet for their fannish activities. Fans are able to create 'fan pages' on Facebook for others to join and 'like'; they can create Twitter hashtags to send instant news feeds across the infosphere; and they can recommend new finds via 'rec lists' on Tumblr.

[26] http://www.fanfiction.net
[27] http://www.deviantart.com/

From this we can learn that fans move with the times – they are quick to embrace new technologies and make the most of them. They use them to create new fanworks, to share and disseminate them, and to index and catalogue them (Jenkins 2006a; 2006b).

2.2.2 The history of fan studies

2.2.2.1. Early works on audiences

Fan studies is a fairly recent discipline which is considered a daughter discipline to the broad fields of cultural and media studies, and is closely related to audience studies, and film and television studies (Jenkins 2012). Fan studies proper appears to have emerged during the 1980's and early 1990's with the seminal works of Jenkins, Lewis, Bacon-Smith, Fiske and Penley. Their research brought a legitimacy to the scholarly study of fandom which hitherto had been non-existent. Prior to this time fans and fan activities were regarded as a dubious focus for academic research, largely because fan behaviour was seen as essentially deviant, trivial, even pathological (Elkington, Jones and Lawrence 2006; Hills 2002; Jenson 1992), symptomatic of a low-brow media culture that worshipped the mundane and the transitory. The assumption that fandom is somehow unimportant is set in stark contrast to its polar opposite – the glorification of high culture, whose fans are aficionados or connoisseurs, whose celebrities are Shakespeare and Mozart, whose primary texts have exemplified the apex of Western culture (Fiske 1992; Harrington and Bielby 1995).

It would be simplistic to suggest that the work of Jenkins et al attempted to tear down such assumptions; but at the very least, they sought to bring fan studies (as a valid field of research) to the attention of the academy, and it is without doubt that they succeeded when one witnesses the vast array of literature that currently exists on the subject.

This is not to say, however, that fans and fandom were not the subject of scholarly discussion prior to the 1980's, even if fan studies as a discipline was still yet to develop. Perhaps the first scholar to turn their gaze on fandom was German sociologist, Theodor

Adorno, whose famously negative discussions on popular culture (especially popular music) has been "regularly criticised and dispensed with in academic and academic-fan accounts of fan culture" (Hills 2002, p.31). In his essay, *On Popular Music* ([1941] 2000), Adorno most famously described the 'jitterbugs' – the jazz and swing enthusiasts of his age – as those "deprived of autonomous will" who "tend to produce passive reactions to what is given them". In what might be considered the first scholarly description of media fandom, Adorno highlighted characteristics that we might easily recognise today as applied by the media to many modern pop fans. These include a "conformity to given standards"; "fanaticism and mass hysteria about popular music"; and "the affinity of their enthusiasm to fury, which may first be directed against the critics of their idols but which may tilt over against the idols themselves" (n.p.).

However, it is worth bearing in mind that Adorno's work (and by extension, the Frankfurt School's) was not largely concerned with fans and their behaviour; rather, its focal point was centred on the apparently pessimistic view that popular culture as a whole served to deaden the masses and preserve the status quo rather than change it. Nevertheless, fan scholars have used Adorno's work to highlight the prevailing assumption of both the media and the academy that fans are somehow mindless consumers without agency (e.g. Ehrenrich, Hess and Jacobs 1992). In particular, Hills (2002, pp.31-35) has cautioned against this view of Adorno's work, suggesting that most scholars have chosen to focus on his more general, pessimistic critiques of pop culture, whilst passing over the more balanced details evident in his theoretical thought, wherein the consumer is bestowed with a 'dialectical thinking' on the individual level, allowing them the scope to enter into a dialogue with the objects of consumption: thus their consumption is not entirely purposeless. Indeed, Adorno himself insists that 'becoming' a jitterbug did not entail a total giving over of oneself to the nefarious machinations of mass-consumerism; rather, that an individual's energy had been given over to the overwhelming effort of accepting what has been enforced upon him or her in a kind of desperate cultural self-preservation ([1941] 2000, n. p.).

Whilst their work does not directly reference fans and fan activities, it is worth mentioning the work of Walter Benjamin and Jean Baudrillard, as they represent some of the earliest work on media audiences and the potential (or lack of potential) they hold as participative agents. In *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* ([1936] 2008), Benjamin gives an early discussion of media participation amongst the masses. Benjamin's view of audience participation, whilst not entirely negative, is somewhat pessimistic in tone. His focus is largely on film and its associated cult of stardom – according to his treatise on the reproducibility of art via modern technologies, the cinematic culture of the 1930's encouraged a new kind of participation – a mass participation, devoid of critical appreciation.

Benjamin posits two forms of participation – one that is distracted, and one that is immersive:

> The person who stands in contemplation before a work of art immerses himself in it; he enters that work […] The distracted mass, on the other hand, absorbs the art into itself (p.33).

The implication is that the individual participates in a work of art in an analytical manner, an approach that enables him to effectively appreciate and critique that work of art by engaging with it on an intellectual level. Conversely, mass participation is distracted, a kind of parasitic and purely emotional process through which an audience appreciates – but does not apprehend in any cerebral manner – an art form. Benjamin's view was that the modern era of film was one of spectacle; and whilst its spectators were not entirely passive, they were not entirely contemplative either. Film gave form to a new kind of cultural apperception, wherein art was ingested in a shallow and distracted manner, where reflection was no longer the purpose of observation. Likewise, the cult of the film afforded the masses a claim to be promoted from passer-by to movie extra, to *become* a work of art. Benjamin perceived this as a fundamental move away from the once-prevalent top-down structure of print culture to something that seemed more democratic. In opening up correspondence columns, newspapers and magazines had afforded the public the opportunity to be published, to

essentially close the gap between the professional organ and its readership, since the masses, throughout their daily lives (especially in the increasingly specialised labour processes of the time), must become an expert in *something*, usually work-related – therefore, through the press, they may "publish an experience at work, a complaint, a piece of reporting or something similar". The reader is "constantly ready to become a writer […] Literary authority is no longer grounded in specialist education but in polytechnic education; it has become common property" (p.23). This is especially pertinent when one considers – as we shall see later – the read-write culture that has grown up in more recent years around the internet, especially around the concept of Web 2.0.

It would seem that Benjamin conceded a certain level of agency to the masses; but in truth, he saw the cultural industry (especially the film industry) as presenting the masses with an illusory kind of agency, one in which dreams of intellectual authority, expertise and even stardom were dangled tantalisingly within grasp. Such promises remained essentially hollow.

If this is a pessimistic view of the power of the audience, then Baudrillard's was even more so. Similarly to Benjamin, his work in *Simulacra and Simulation* ([1981] 1994) is concerned with the shallow sense of participation that the media proffers to an audience, where information is an agent of hyperreality, staged to cater to the desires of the masses via the radio phone-in and the nondirective interview. Yet Baudrillard goes a step further, stating that information is a destructive force that "devours itself" in the act of being staged and creating meaning. The mass media is the instrument through which this destruction is achieved; and furthermore, it is through this act of dissolving information that socialisation itself is destroyed. In using information to construct a hyperreality – or a simulation, a myth of reality – the mass media subordinates it to the medium itself (e.g. film, radio, television, etc.), thus distorting or even annihilating meaning:

> Behind […] the mass media, the pressure of information pursues an irresistible destructuration of the social. Thus information dissolves meaning and dissolves the social [… T]he media are

> producers not of socialization, but of exactly the opposite, of the implosion of the social in the masses (p.81).

Baudrillard's contention, that the media strips information (communication) of meaning and restages it to the masses, finds expression in the news broadcasts that both condemn terrorism and glorify it in the insatiable glee of their bulletins; in the Hollywood system that creates a mythos of super stardom and then cannibalises its young. Yet even Baudrillard himself is wary of casting the masses as a dumb and gullible audience; instead, he questions whether it is not the media that dupes the masses, but the masses itself that manipulates the media into creating false meanings, mythos and spectacle. Likewise, he is careful to insist that one should not fall into the 'trap' of believing the masses credulous enough to believe in the myth they are tacitly complicit in creating: myth "exists, but one must guard against thinking that people believe in it: this is the trap of critical thinking that can only be exercised if it presupposes the naïveté and stupidity of the masses" (p.81).

In all three of the above discussions, it is striking that, whilst each acknowledges the toxic nature of the media, none casts the masses as its mere dupes. Each concedes that the consumer of media owns a sense of agency in various (though limited) ways, ways that might be summarised as follows:

- Consumers, as independent beings, may enter into dialogic relationships with the objects of their consumption, and thus bestow individual meaning onto those objects (Adorno);
- Modern technology affords consumers opportunities to be published, or to publish, where such opportunities were limited or non-existent before (Benjamin);
- Consumers are, to a certain extent, complicit with the mass media in the deconstruction of meaning and the creation of mythos (hyperreality) (Baudrillard).

These are all points that become even more pertinent in light of the emergent field of fan studies during the 1980's and 1990's, which will be discussed in the next section.

2.2.2.2. The birth of fan studies

The 60's and 70's were a period of relative silence from media fans – not because they had nothing to say, but because a fear of disapprobation from peers and family drove their activities underground (Bacon-Smith 1992). This ridicule from non-fans perpetuated a preconception wherein fans were seen as obsessed, irrational, illogical, and emotionally stunted (Jenson 1992). This was a view exemplified in a 1986 *Saturday Night Live* sketch, where *Star Trek* actor William Shatner confronted actors dressed as stereotypically nerdy fans by telling them to 'get a life' and generally denigrating their inability to get a girl or have any concern for anything outside of the *Star Trek* universe (Jenkins [1992] 2013, pp.9-12). This popular assumption carried over into the scholarly world, and fans were passed over as subjects unworthy of study, whose fanatical obsession with cult media showed them to be the dupes of the mass media, and confirmed the apparent conclusions of Walter, Adorno, and later Baudrillard. Scholars preferred to focus on general audience response to pop culture, and fans were perceived as little more than groupies or mindless members of the mob.

But some fans were also academics, and one such was Henry Jenkins, a self-proclaimed academic-fan, or *acafan* for short. Jenkins, having spent some time in the fan community during the 1980's, and having been drawn into its rich and vibrant culture, became intrigued by the resourcefulness and creativity of its members. During the late 1980's, and especially throughout the 1990's, he sought to bring to public and scholarly attention that fans did *not* in fact appear to be mindless consumers of pop culture, let alone mentally deranged; but that they were intelligent[28], creative people who appropriated these cultural texts in order to critique, modify and make sense of them in literary and artistic ways. In his seminal work, *Textual Poachers* ([1992] 2013), Jenkins appropriated the titular phrase from the work of Michel de Certeau (1984), likening fans to readers who 'poach' from established texts in order

[28] Bacon-Smith (1992) describes several well-known *Star Trek* fans in her ethnographic study, *Enterprising Women*, including a Ph.D. graduate in Arthurian scholarship, a Masters graduate in botany, and a former chemist turned commercial science fiction writer (pp.86-87).

to take from them what is most meaningful and pleasurable. De Certeau's contention was that readers are not passive – in the act of reading they are negotiating with the text, struggling for dominance over its hidden meanings, critiquing the author's work, and perhaps drawing conclusions that the author never intended. Jenkins saw many similarities between de Certeau's reader and the media fan. In fact, fans very often were *not* mindlessly accepting of the source text – rather, many held contradictory relationships to it, some even disagreeing with or rejecting certain portrayals of a character or plot.

Textual Poachers is an ethnographic work, a work wherein the researcher immerses themselves and participates in the community of study. Jenkins, being a fan already, was comfortable blending into the various fan communities, focusing on groups that followed various TV shows such as *Blakes 7, Beauty and the Beast,* and *Star Trek*. He brought to light several fannish practices that highlighted the creativity of the fans themselves – the making of *fanworks* – fanfiction, fanart, vids, filk, zines, and various other activities. What intrigued him, however, was the participatory aspects of these endeavours, which were manifested in the group construction of certain (literary or cultural) genres; the building of 'worlds' which fans were able to enlarge upon, or even modify and remediate to their own tastes; and a form of mentorship wherein experienced fans would tutor and support novices in practical ways, e.g. giving advice on grammar; passing on tutorials for recording vids; giving feedback on fanfictions, etc.

Throughout his scholarly career, Jenkins has continued to delve into the participatory elements of fan activity, coining the term *participatory culture* to describe the cooperative manner in which fans (and other groups) come together to modify, remediate, appropriate and make sense of a primary text through the creation of related cultural artefacts. This concept was to gain force during the 90's when the growing popularity of the internet made it easier for fans to congregate online in larger numbers, and a 'read-write' culture afforded the

amateur greater control of dynamic texts that could be constantly modified and/or expanded upon.

Jenkins – though celebrated for his influential work on fandom that, to all intents and purposes, kick-started fan studies as a discipline – was not the only academic to draw attention to fans at around the same time. In the same year as *Textual Poachers*, he had also contributed a piece on filking to *The Adoring Audience*, edited by Louise Lewis, and whose contributors included other academics interested in fandom, such as John Fiske. This anthology of essays gave what at the time was a comprehensive overview of the state of fandom, and like *Textual Poachers* attempted to dispel the negative connotations attached to fandom by refuting the presumption of fan-as-mindless-obsessive, instead valorising their creativity. Unlike *Textual Poachers*, however, *Adoring Audience* offers brief snapshots of rather more disturbing accounts of fandom, such as the transcripts of letters from anonymous fans to their (usually film or music) idols, which had failed to reach the intended reader and had languished in stacks of fan club office mail (Vermorel and Vermorel 1992). These serve to remind us that, as with the general populace, not all fans are prodigies or creative geniuses; but on the whole *Adoring Audience* takes a positive approach to fandom that had rarely been expressed previously.

Perhaps mostly notably in this anthology, John Fiske outlined his 'cultural economy' of fandom (1992, pp.30-49), which sought to categorise fan productivity into different levels of output. This was perhaps the first attempt to put together a plausible working model of fans and their productive behaviour. Fiske defined three levels – *semiotic, enunciative* and *textual*. The first speaks of largely internal processes – how one internalises and presents cultural signs via meaning- and sense-making (e.g. through dress or the music one listens to). The second comprises a kind of oral culture, wherein those cultural signs internalised at the semiotic level are externalised and verbalised to others. The last is based on the material production of fans, which may comprise text, though not specifically – other forms of textual production include paintings, costumes, badges, videos, music, figurines, mods, etc. Fiske notes that textual

production is rarely engaged in for monetary gain, even though production qualities may equal that of professionals' – for the most part, fans create *fanworks* to circulate amongst their own community, and for social rather than economic gain. This has been called a 'gift economy' (see Jones 2014a; Chin 2014).

Also in 1992, Camille Bacon-Smith published her ethnographic study of fan groups from the south, central and west United States, *Enterprising Women*. This in-depth analysis of fans from an insider point of view provided extensive and meticulous detail on the activities and productivity of (mostly) female fans, the great majority of whom were followers of *Star Trek, Blakes 7, Starsky and Hutch* and *The Professionals.* Many of the subjects in Bacon-Smith's work were followed for several years, and some vital insight is made into the fan's way of thinking. Nevertheless, unlike her contemporaries, such as Jenkins and Penley, Bacon-Smith attempts to draw a line of demarcation between herself and the fan community (she constantly refers to herself as 'the Ethnographer'), an approach that does not always ring true (Hills 2002). In fact, in common with her early contemporaries, Bacon-Smith's work demonstrates a fundamental identity crisis – is she more fan or ethnographer? Is she more insider than outsider? Jenkins was to overcome this by later coining the term 'acafan' – but during this time period there is a sense that the early fan studies reveal the teething pains of an infant discipline whose disciples were torn between a background of academic rigor and a desire to prove their field worthy of study. Indeed, Jenkins has been accused, both by his contemporaries and by more recent fan scholars, of having a political agenda (Bacon-Smith 1992; Hills 2002), and of disseminating a utopian view of fandom that ignores the more problematic aspects inherent in the field.

Fan studies during this period tended to focus on the feminist aspects of fandom (see the early work of Radway (1984), for example), and there is much greater emphasis on the particularly female fan phenomenon of *slash* or homoerotic fiction. Constance Penley's (1992) psychoanalytic work in the fan field also highlights this fascination with slash fiction (more

commonly called K/S[29] fiction in Bacon-Smith's literature), and the scholarly need to understand why largely heterosexual groups of women were writing about gay relationships between the heroes of media products. This early focus on slash tends to occupy most of the fan studies of this period, as if, by explaining the psychosocial impetus to write slash, one might touch the core of what it is to be a fan and to engage in fannish activity. This is far from being the case, as more recent scholarly excursions into fandom have made clear (see, for example, Duffett 2013, ch.6; Driscoll 2006; Stasi 2006) – but it does serve to highlight the fact that, in its youth, fan studies was still concerned with exploring and explaining the more 'alien' aspects of fan culture.

Whilst it is true that most fanfiction is written by female fans (Busse and Hellekson 2006; Driscoll 2006), it is simplistic to assume that all fandom is a particularly female domain, as the bias of many early studies might have one believe. Moreover, it is simplistic to assume that the creative output of fandom is comprised only of textual or visual forms. Fandom attracts people of both genders, from all backgrounds, creeds, age and ethnicities (Chin and Morimoto 2013). Its textual forms are not limited to fiction, its artworks not restricted to static artefacts. Fandom is not an ideal of feminist resistance writ large, nor is it a political statement against the establishment. It denies none of the above and yet it is tied to none. It is all-encompassing, protean, and merely the sum of its many parts.

Understandably, these early forays into fan studies focus on the most visible aspects of a community that was – more so then than now – obscured. Ironically, only a year or so after the seminal works of Jenkins, Bacon-Smith, Penley and Lewis et al, a new technology would arrive to change the landscape of fan communities completely – and that technology was the internet.

[29] As in 'Kirk/Spock', a generic term for homoerotic literature – sometimes explicit but not always – within the fan community, based upon the original *Star Trek* series.

2.2.2.3. Fan studies in the age of the internet

As noted above, during the early 90's fan studies focused on communities that were, to all intents and purposes, fragmented, hidden, less easily accessible than we may take for granted nowadays. The classic studies mentioned above researched fan communities that were based on physical 'circles' of, on average, 15-20 women (Bacon-Smith 1992). Entry into these circles was strictly guarded, involving several stages of initiation and mentorship of neophyte fans by more experienced mentors. The wider fan community would come together about once a year during the large-scale national or international *cons*, during which friendships were formed or renewed, fan talk was exchanged and fanworks offered on sale (usually at no profit to the creator). The rest of the year relationships were maintained via vast postal networks which criss-crossed the world (but mostly the United States) and facilitated the exchange of letters, zines, artworks, and other goods. It would seem that many isolated, self-identified fans may have passed many years without even knowing that a wider fan community existed; and once they discovered they were not alone, it may have been impossible for them take part in that community (Jenkins 2006a; Bacon-Smith 1992).

This lack of ease of access meant that scholars in the field were often limited in scope when researching fan communities. Moreover, since the community itself was so enclosed, many fan scholars used ethnographic methods to 'infiltrate' their chosen fan communities, wherein they could become a part of the group and thus better understand its cultural norms and machinations. Ethnography – according to Bacon-Smith a "data-intensive method in which the researcher studies the culture of informants where they gather in their own native habitats" – is still the most widely-used methodology in fan studies (Evans and Stasi 2014), and many ethnographic studies of fan groups seek to record the acafan's own narrative as well as that of the fan group itself, the problems of which will be enlarged upon later (see section 3.1.1). Suffice it to say that the old models of a closed-off fan culture, populated mostly by women who were reluctant to talk about their 'queer' readings of mainstream media

products, propagated a vision of fan communities which gave off a distinctly exotic mystique, one that the traditional ethnographer might find irresistible. Inevitably, in the esoteric fan group, the ethnographer-cum-newly-born-insider uncovers the story of herself as well as that of the other.

In many ways, the fan community was demystified by the internet going mainstream, but this statement should be qualified by adding that, whilst the access to and visibility of fandom was irrevocably changed by the World Wide Web, most of the definitive aspects of fandom remained intact in this new digital world. Their forms may have been adapted, but by and large they were translated live and whole. For example, the stages of initiation that neophyte fans go through – acculturation through exposure to the community's norms, nomenclature and generic forms – still dictate that fan's acceptance into the group as a whole (Gee and Hayes 2010; Pugh 2005, ch.6). Likewise, mentorship still exists, as do all the original creative forms fans engage in – fanfic, fanart, vidding, cosplay and so on. The main difference between then and now is that much of these practices have migrated to the digital realm. Similar to Levy's (1999) concept of collective intelligence, the digital has allowed groups of fans to come together from disparate backgrounds to share extensive forms of knowledge with one another to pass on skills, information, and other forms of support, in what has been called *distributed mentorship* (Evans et al 2017; Campbell et al 2016).

Fan scholars nowadays are not merely restricted to the study of North American fans; neither are they constrained to isolated pockets of fandom. A Google search will put the scholar in contact with thousands of fan groups dedicated to thousands of fandoms throughout the world. *Star Trek* fandom is only the tip of the iceberg. From TV shows to movies to books to comics to videogames – fandoms exist for even the most obscure products of the culture and media industry, fandoms which, only 20 short years ago, might have remained hidden. The fan population, once characterised as, on average, female, middle-aged and working-class or semi-professional (Bacon-Smith 1992) now displays a more level playing

field. Perhaps the largest percentage of fanfic writers are now school-age females, and, whilst English is still the *lingua franca* of fanfiction, many writers are non-native English speakers from all over the world – Mexico, Japan, China, Pakistan, the Philippines and so on (Black 2008). Support and mentorship of neophyte fans has shifted from enculturation to the more practical activities such as online grammar tutorials and *beta-reading*. This practice, which takes its name from the computer industry term *beta-testing*, involves a form of peer review and editorship, wherein a more experienced fan, usually an already well-respected writer in the community, will read through a newer fan's stories, correcting grammar and spelling mistakes, adding constructive criticism, and guiding writers in the community aesthetic – that is, what aspects of the story are likely to be approved by peers (Gee and Hayes 2010; Black 2008). Of course, such practices existed in pre-internet times – but they accrue new dimensions as larger, global communities of fans seek wider readerships than ever before, and linguistic barriers are communally overcome through the mutual desire to build a culture – not just narrative, not just aesthetic – around a beloved media product.

In the age of the internet, fan studies has gradually moved away from the whys and wherefores of fandom to the impact it has on wider society. Jenkins' concept of participatory culture has spawned offshoots in the daughter concepts of *produsage* (Bruns 2008; 2006), *convergence culture* (Jenkins 2006b), *commons-based peer production* (Benkler and Nissenbaum 2006), *craft consumers* (Campbell 2005), and *pro-ams* (Leadbeater and Miller 2004) which reflect a growing desire amongst the cultural and media industries to engage fans in the production of franchises across multiple platforms and over an extended period of time.

In another vein, Black (2008) and Gee and Hayes (2010) have explored the positive impact fandom can have in the classroom. Black's (2008) study of ELL (English Language Learners) students in Canada and the US demonstrates how posting their anime fanfiction on Fanfiction.net (a multi-fandom internet archive for fanfiction), and the support and inspiration they receive from other fans, encourages them to improve their language and written skills in

ways that the traditional education system cannot. Michael Lachney (2012) similarly talks about the ways in which fanfiction and fanvids can educate students about copyright and fair use within a classroom setting. This does not merely encourage peer learning, but *bi-directional* learning, wherein the teacher is also learning from the students, and both may find a common ground to engage with and invest in:

> ...as students bring their fandom into the classroom they are given an expert voice through the familiar language of popular culture. This serves to facilitate discussions and meta-analyses where learning takes place bi-directionally between teacher and student (p.197).

The expert voice of fans need not only be encouraged in the classroom. It can also be indicative of transferable skills that can be taken into potential careers. Gee and Hayes (2010), for example, describe the modding communities based around videogames such as *The Sims* and *Second Life*, whose members reappropriate game assets, modifying complex systems such as 3D models and game codes to better conform to their own desires. Through such creative endeavours, these gaming fans learn invaluable skills not easily won outside of the community, skills which can be taken into the future workplace and valued by wider society.

Other studies have considered fans as audience members (Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998; Bielby and Harrington 1995) who seek to understand and make meaning of the primary texts through Fiske's three categories of semiotic, enunciative and textual production. Abercrombie and Longhurst – as we have seen (see pp.30-31) – particularly rejected the fan/non-fan divide, positing instead a continuum from consumer, through to fan-cultist-enthusiast, and to petty producer (which is, to all intents and purposes, a fan who has turned their fan products into commodities sold for profit). Studies such as these served to broaden perceptions of what constitutes fandom, and to question current preconceptions of what a fan *is*. Abercrombie and Longhurst (1995) pointed out that sometimes it is not always easy to pinpoint the difference between fans and followers of a cult series, for example; followers may watch every episode of a TV show, they may talk about it constantly over the water cooler or a cup of coffee, they may trawl the internet for every available scrap of information about it –

but does that make them a fan or not? And does it make them any less of a fan than someone who writes fanfiction and creates fanart? The answers to these questions are not as clear-cut as they may seem, as has been discussed.

More recently, fan scholars such as Busse and Gray (2011) have explored the fan in the era of new media. Far from the valorised depictions of fandom in the works of the early 1990's, Busse and Grey question the agency and power of the fan whose online interactions with media can be monitored and, to an extent, controlled by the rights owner. The digital age offers fans participatory opportunities never before afforded them; but on the flip-side, it offers media companies the chance to manipulate fans like never before, through the widespread use of social media, viral marketing and tailored advertisements. The trend towards *user-generated content* (UGC) – user-created works of all kinds that are appropriated by the media industry in everything from article comments and reviews to consumer-made posters to viewer-provided news reports (citizen journalism) – has naturally extended to fanworks as well. Participatory culture does not necessarily entail the complete agency of fans in the creation and distribution of their work. As Keltie (2017) warns us:

> […w]hen participants in cultural production attempt to use participatory cultural practices to break free of the culture industry and create and share their own content, it is not necessarily the content that is absorbed into the culture industry, but rather the practices themselves. […I]t emerges that participatory culture as a form of cultural engagement is limited by the potentialities of the institutional structures currently in place: that *moments* of participatory space are opened up to audiences, but that the culture industry is quick to move into such spaces (p.10).

It cannot be denied that Web 2.0 technologies have afforded fans ways in which to break free of the media industry like never before, but these resistive, emancipatory practices are quickly "colonised and adapted to", eventually being "folded into the business models of the culture industry to incorporate fan labour into production and marketing processes" (Keltie 2017, p.145). Examples of this are LucasFilm's authorisation of fanworks on their official Star Wars website, granted only when the creator gave up the intellectual ownership of their

work to LucasFilm, and the distribution company's legal action against the participatory creators of the sci-fi film *Iron Sky*, when they attempted to disseminate it through file sharing networks (Butler 2016). This is suggestive of the still-fraught and contentious relationship between fans and the media industry, which persists despite the freedom afforded by digital spaces. Nevertheless, interactions between the media industry and fans can be positive. Fans can even see their work become part of fan 'canon', or the source text, through various means. Some fans have actually written for their fandoms professionally (e.g. Melissa Good for *Xena*, Jean Lorrah and Peter David for *Star Trek*)[30]. Another example of fanworks becoming 'professional works' is when videogame company Team Ninja held a contest where fans could design character costumes for their game, *Dead or Alive*. The winners would have their creations used in the final game (Odoerfer 2015).

In the past two decades, therefore, fan studies has moved from the cultural, literary and psychosocial evaluation of fans to a more diverse and encompassing outlook. Fans have been investigated from the perspectives of media and audience studies (Bielby and Harrington 1995; Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998), leisure studies (Elkington, Jones and Lawrence, 2006), digital anthropology (Horst and Miller 2012), education (Booth 2015a; Gee and Hayes 2010; Black 2008) and in the context of online social media (Bennett and Chin 2014; Bore and Hickman 2013).

These studies and more have done much to enrich and enlighten our current state of knowledge on fans and fan behaviour, and it is hoped that this summary history of fan studies has served to elucidate how much ground has been covered over the years.

2.2.3 Literature analysis

This section examines and extracts references to fan information behaviour from both the fan studies and LIS literature. These references are then brought together, in order to

[30] An incomplete list of cases can be found at https://fanlore.org/wiki/Fans_Turned_Pro.

create as complete a picture of the current state of knowledge of fan information behaviour within both disciplines. As far as is known, this analysis and synthesis has not been undertaken in any previous research.

2.2.3.1. Fan information behaviour in fan studies

Whilst many fan studies fail to specifically account for fan information behaviour, if one looks closely there are several references to fans and their relationships with information, within the wider context of fan practice. For example, Aardse (2014) looks at the ways in which young gaming fans exchange information across networks and various transmedia outlets in alternate reality games (ARGs); and Sihvonen (2011) briefly explores how players of *The Sims* organise and archive of digital game assets. Sihvonen's (2011) work is especially interesting as she devotes some pages to describing the way in which fans of *The Sims* index, categorise and organise digital files related to the game. This involves the creation of 'sub-folders' for gaming files, which are arranged by theme, creator, style, function, etc., and this type of practice can be so important as to have forum threads dedicated to it "where a few avid Sims 2 players compare their methods for organising data" (p.175). Not only this, but Sihvonen also adds:

> Various internet spaces, also in the context of *The Sims*, can be regarded as repositories of collective cultural memory and important leisurely places as well as arenas in which power relations are put to test (p.177).

This highlights the way in which digital fan-made spaces might be regarded as sites of fan-curated collections which also serve as centres of community (and which also, perhaps, finds some parallel in modern public libraries)[31]. In fact, there is evidence of fans co-opting online spaces to create not only fan communities, but also places to archive their fanworks. Versaphile (2011) gives an account of how fans have done exactly this, using a variety of platforms specifically to archive fanfiction – Usenet, ONElist, LiveJournal, even their own

[31] The indexing, categorisation and organisation of *The Sims* files is discussed in more detail in an ethnographic study of a *Sims* fan community conducted by the author as part of her Master's thesis (Price 2012), http://dx.doi.org/10.17613/M6Z631.

private websites. However, most of these are problematic solutions to the concept of preserving fanworks, mostly because they are not designed to be used as archives, and also because of their impermanence – ONEList disappeared in a merger with eGroups and then Yahoo (Versaphile 2011, p.8), and any online platform is subject to shutting down at any given moment when it is no longer profitable, or when business interests change. Versaphile encourages fanfic authors to self-archive, praising sites such as Archive of Our Own and eFiction for helping automate the process. Indeed, AO3 is a fan-run, non-profit platform that ensures fan investment in the wider archival project and that mitigates the problem of being subject to the whims of corporate business owners.

Other aspects of fan behaviour are discussed which might also come under the remit of LIS. Black (2009; 2008) has investigated the effect fanfiction has on both the (digital) literacy and language acquisition of youngsters (particularly EAL students, and through practices of mentorship and peer learning); Pugh (2005) looks at myriad phenomena related to fanfiction, including beta-readers, resource guide writing, feedback culture, and LiveJournal reclists; Bore and Hickman (2013) discuss the information use of fan groups on Twitter; and Jenkins (2006a) discusses the way in which the "new digital environment expands [fans'] power to archive, annotate, appropriate, and recirculate media products" (pp.150-151). These examples show a similar preoccupation to LIS in the subjects of digital literacy, DIY publishing, internet communication and crowdsourcing, which are some of the hallmarks of the information society. Even going back to the 'classic' fan studies of the early 1990's, the work of Jenkins ([1992] 2013), Bacon-Smith (1992) and Harrington and Bielby (1995) discuss the information behaviour of fans (though not named as such) in terms of their attitudes to authorship (e.g. collaborative writing and small/amateur/DIY presses), copyright (e.g. fanfiction and fanzines) and distribution (e.g. informal postal networks and fan conventions).

Having given a short summary of references to information behaviour in fan studies, the next section now turns to previous LIS studies in the area of fan information behaviour.

2.2.3.2. Fan information behaviour in LIS

Information science has rarely investigated the information behaviour of fans. This is not to say that literature on the subject is non-existent, but it is sparse, although growing somewhat in recent years, as evidenced by work on the information behaviour of videogame fans (Nyman 2011; Adams 2009), classification in fanfiction communities (Bullard 2014; Dalton 2012) and in the publishing of fanfiction (Peckosie and Hill 2015). As we have seen, within fan studies itself, the information behaviour of fans tends to be a brief aside to larger scale studies of fandom, and is rarely underpinned by theories or models established by Library and Information Science. It is thus troublesome to extrapolate the relevant evidence from the fan studies corpus. This section attempts to give a short overview of studies in fan information behaviour within LIS.

Perhaps the first study to look exclusively at the information behaviour of fans was conducted by Hart et al (1999), whose paper focused on the problematic nature of fan-produced literature from an LIS perspective. They recognised three main phenomena: 1) the growing demand for and production of fan-produced or related electronic resources; 2) the role of the internet as a growing forum for fan information creation and exchange; and 3) that companies were awakening to the benefits of engaging with these fan groups. Despite the growing visibility of fan literature and information resources, Hart et al (1999) found that LIS practitioners appeared to be unaware of or even hostile towards these developments, few attempts having been made by LIS professionals to classify, index, organise or archive this new type of grey literature. Reasons for this included the "inherently ephemeral nature of the material and the fact that the majority of the information is outside normal bibliographic control" (p.81), or, indeed, preconceptions of fans as 'deviant' (see also Jenson 1992); and their work as low quality. Thus Hart et al attempted to bridge the gap, proposing a model for use in bringing fan literature under expert bibliographical control, contending that LIS

professionals should re-examine the information behaviours of fans in order to better cater to an untapped body of potential library users.

Through case studies of digital fan groups in cult media and music (*Star Trek* and Frank Zappa specifically), Hart et al discovered that fans were already creating their own electronic information resources for both fanworks and commercially-produced material. This material was not merely confined to text but also included image files, sound clips, and other new electronic media, whether fan-made or commercial products. Furthermore, bibliographical standards amongst these 'amateurs' appeared to be quite sophisticated: "close examination of the Web sites produced by fans has begun to show that there is a highly organised and sophisticated structure to fan information" (p.87). From observing these different fan groups and their digital information behaviour, Hart et al were able to create a "structure of fan activity in relation to publications and some activities from which publication result" (reproduced in Table 8 below), which categorised both fan-made and commercially produced materials used by fans. In so doing their intention was to create a "generalisable structure of electronic fan information" for LIS practitioners to work with in the development of formal bibliographic schemes which would then be implemented in professional spheres.

Books/literature	Magazines	Fanzines	Electronic	Events	Trade
Biographical	Limited editions	Biographies	CD ROMs	Auctions	Advertisements
Chronologies	Part works	Chronologies	Chat groups	Clubs	Brochures
Dictionaries	Serial	Guides	Discussion	Conferences	Catalogues
Directories	Special interest	Images	E-mails	Meetings	Collectibles
Encyclopaedia		Letter zines	Sound files	Performances	Posters
Guides		Listings	Video clips	Swops	Products
		Official	Web sites		Specifications
		Unofficial			

Table 8: The structure of fan information (Hart et al. 1999)

This, however, failed to take place, and further research promised by Hart et al also failed to materialise. Eighteen years later and we are still no closer to developing (or, indeed, even recognising the need for) a proper classification of fanworks. To wit: the Library of Congress possesses no classification scheme for fanworks, though their subject headings do accommodate works *about* fanworks[32]. This is in stark contrast to the sophisticated and highly granular classification schemes developed for a wide variety of fanworks by fans themselves. Another notable development since Hart et al's study is the many and varied forms of digital artefacts created and organised by fans, from fanfiction and fanart to fanfilms and videogame mods (short for 'modifications'), to name but a few. Other fan-created information resources include wikis, databases, videogame walkthroughs, digital libraries or archives, guides and rec lists. All these represent a vast swathe of cultural output that LIS practitioners have yet to acknowledge, and it is possible, if this continues to be the case, that this may result in a kind of 'cultural blindspot' akin to the one we face with the deep or invisible web[33], or, indeed, the so-called dark net[34].

In an attempt to give an update to Hart et al's (1999) paper, Price and Robinson (2017) investigated current UK library collection policies and whether fanworks make any appearance in them (they do not); and also described the attitudes of LIS Masters students towards the possibility of libraries collecting fanfiction in the future, which were gleaned from an online survey. Whilst these students did generally consider fanfiction worthy of attention from memory institutions, there was still a feeling that fanfiction was too "impromptu, ephemeral, amateurish and numerous" (Price and Robinson 2017, 3.38) to be adequately handled by

[32] Twitter conversation with Matt Shaw, curator at the British Library, dated 25th June 2014, (https://twitter.com/LudiPrice/status/481790742499958784). Shaw worked on cataloguing the British Library's small collection of American (print) fanzines using LoC subject headings, which were usually classified under Fan fiction -- Periodicals. Shaw stated that there was little granularity, and when questioned as to why so little bibliographic control existed for fanworks, stated that whilst the 'non-academic' nature of the materials were a factor, personally he felt "the limited number of materials published, plus possibly lack of publisher guideance/blurb [sic]" were to blame. See Appendix A, p.332.

[33] That is, the part of the web not indexed by search engines, or hidden behind firewalls or password-protected security.

[34] Those parts of the early internet (or, indeed, the present internet) that were never archived and are now irretrievably lost.

library and information professionals, with some students suggesting that a dialogue between those professionals and the fans themselves would be beneficial if a strategy for collecting fanfiction were to be brought forward. Nevertheless, it would appear that public libraries now appreciate the benefits in using fandom as a way to engage users (Botelho 2017; Atkinson 2015; Rogers-Whitehead 2015; Griffis and Jones 2008); yet, despite this, fanfiction's use as extended reading material, and as a genre in its own right, is currently still not quite on LIS's agenda, although it is an area of growing interest, particularly in school libraries (Lundqvist 2017; Evans et al 2016; Frisbie 2016).

Whilst the literature on fan information behaviour remains scarce, there has been a small but growing interest in this area. This may be due in part to the trend towards user-generated and participatory information architectures over the past eight years or so (cf. Bruns 2008; Jennings 2007). Much recent attention has been focused on the increasing popularity of crowdsourcing as a form of generating digital content, including Flickr (Brown and Quan-Haase 2012; Cox, Clough and Marlow 2008), the Archive of Our Own (Dalton 2012), and Movie Tuner (Vig 2010). All this has been aided by the concept of the read-write web (Web 2.0), the free use of API's (Application Programming Interfaces) to create complex mashups (see Figures 2 and 3), and the rise of social media and microblogging sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Tumblr, Instagram and Pinterest, to name but a few (Gauntlett 2011; Jennings 2007).



Figure 2: Screencap from the Avengers of Oz: Age of Tin Man fan trailer, a complex mashup of footage from the second Avengers and Wizard of Oz movies by Darren Wallace (2015). This involves considerable technical skills. Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LeZ_F1op9N8

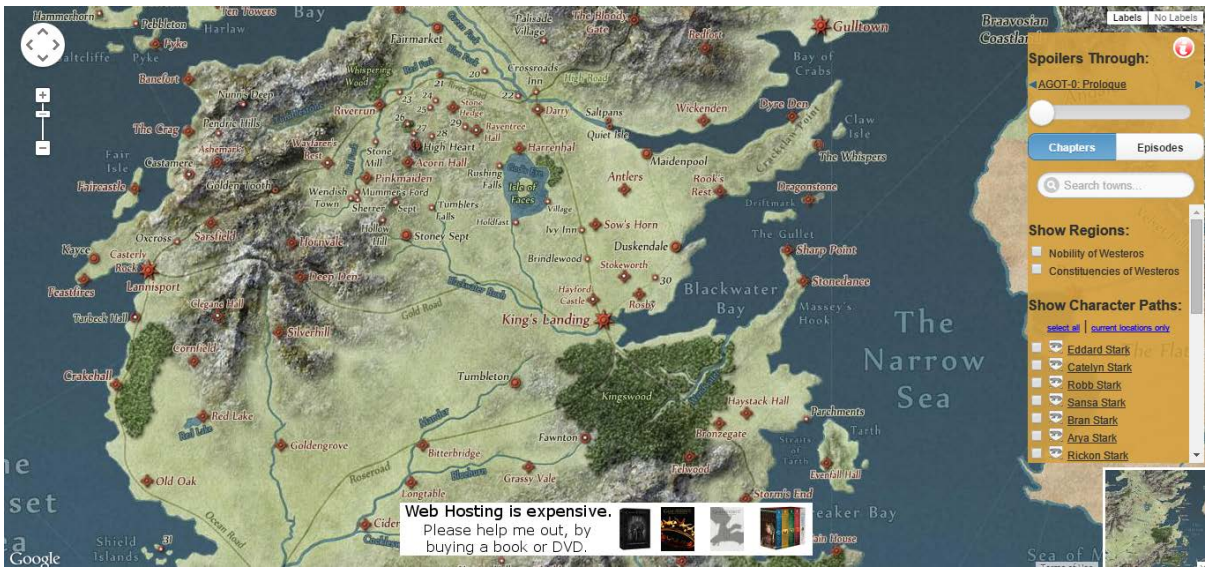


Figure 3: Fan-made interactive map of Westeros from Game of Thrones, using the Google Maps API. CC-BY-NC-SA (The MountainGoat and Tear, n.d.; ©George RR Martin). Source: http://quartermaester.info/

This trend towards a bottom-up or heterarchical (that is, unranked – see Bruns 2006) system of online, digital content creation has naturally been explored in the context of cult media and fan-based production (e.g. Janissary Collective 2014; Hills 2013; Jenkins 2006b). This apparent levelling of the digital playing field has allowed user-generated data, information and artefacts to gain a currency and acceptance amongst the professional fields that would not have been entertained even twenty years ago. Wikipedia is an obvious example of this, with the challenges it poses to academic and/or professional authority and the authorial status quo[35]; but other instances include citizen journalism, open source software programming, amateur videogame development (enabled through sites like Steam[36]) and basement-made music projects. In terms of fan culture, we see various online communities coalescing around certain franchises or media texts to engage in fantasy and the exchange of common interests and related cultural artefacts, as well as information (Lee et al 2013). These complex interchanges naturally accrue large amounts of user-generated content (UGC) or fanworks

[35] Despite the contributions of both academics and professionals to Wikipedia, the use of Wikipedia as an academic or professional source of knowledge is still hotly contested, especially where students writing their assignments are concerned; see, for example, Lih (2009).
[36] http://store.steampowered.com/

that, as Hart et al (1999) suggested in their early research, demands vast efforts of organisation and control. Thus we are looking at a multifaceted set of behaviours that manifest around fan content creation, from information seeking to creation to control. Various aspects of this chain are now just beginning to be explored. For example, Julia Bullard, who has been conducting a long-term ethnographical study of an online fanfiction repository, summarises the early stages of her research into what she calls 'curated folksonomies' by noting the differences between the curated and 'pure' forms of folksonomy:

> The collaborative classification project in this system is the design and maintenance of a curated folksonomy – a system of tag synonyms and tag relationships that addresses some of the major shortcomings of a pure, unregulated folksonomy (Bullard 2014, p.47).

The study implies that curated folksonomy involves a degree of structure that mitigates some of the better-known problems involved with pure folksonomies (e.g. the oft-quoted example of tagging photos of oneself with 'me'). This is particularly topical in terms of fandom, because many fanwork repositories use folksonomies as a way of organising documents, and this can be seen most clearly in the fanfiction archive, Archive of Our Own (AO3)[37], where individual authors tag their work, and volunteers (known as 'tag wranglers') curate these tags.

This is not a new concept, and is similar to the idea of 'democratic indexing' (Rafferty and Hidderley 2007; Hidderley and Rafferty 1997) wherein experts evaluate and formalise the indexing choices of a systems' users to create a taxonomy/ontology. Democratic indexing "examines the terms or tags attached to each field and creates a collective interpretation for each field based on counting terms" (Rafferty 2010, p.260). As Rafferty (2010) herself notes, such processes have now been made much more achievable via Web 2.0 technologies, which, as she opines, "could potentially allow for the development of interesting approaches to the retrieval of cultural documentation including fiction" (p.260). This is, indeed, exactly what has

[37] http://archiveofourown.org/

happened on the fanfiction repository, AO3. In their previous study of indexing methods on Flickr, Rafferty and Hidderley (2007) note:

> The discourse of user-based indexing is one of democracy, organic growth, and of user emancipation, but there are hints throughout the literature of the need for *post hoc* disciplining of some sort. This suggests that, despite Shirky's claim of philosophical paradigm shifting for social tagging, there is a residing doubt amongst information professionals that self-organising systems can work without there being some element of control and some form of "representative authority". Perhaps all that social tagging heralds is a shift towards user warrant (p.408).

I would contend that this is exactly what has happened on Archive of Our Own, where the tag wrangling system enables domain experts to discipline user tags whilst "still allowing for user interpretation and the recording of historical shifts in our understanding of generic [and fan] history" (Rafferty 2010, p.260).

To return to the concept of warrant, as mentioned in Rafferty and Hidderley's (2007) quote above, Bullard's work has also yielded some fascinating insights into how a curated folksonomy works in practice, and how this collaborative process involves the application of different warrants to create an effective daily classification system that is in constant and rigorous use. Classification design is always, to some extent, reliant on the concept of warrant. As Bullard (2017) explains, "classification designers express their allegiance with particular theories of classification through their appeals to warrant – the body of evidence and terminology taken as authoritative in the design of a classification system" (p.76); or, by Beghtol's (1986, p.110) definition, warrant is "the authority a classificationist invokes first to justify and subsequently to verify decisions" in their choice of terms. Different warrants include: 1) literary warrant (classification derived from the field of scholarship that is being classified); 2) scientific or consensus warrant (classification based on current scientific conclusions and consensus between relevant fields); 3) user warrant (classification based on user needs and/or expectations); 4) ethical warrant (classification based on ethical considerations regarding users, e.g. minority groups, discriminatory language in current

classification systems, potential divergence from consensus terms) (see Bullard 2017 for a more in-depth discussion).

In practice, classification design is more complex, and several types of warrant may be used at any given time. Bullard's (2017) work expands on this by giving examples of how warrant works in an online fanfiction repository where its folksonomy is highly specialised and constantly expanding. The volunteers who curate this folksonomy (tag wranglers as they are known on Archive of Our Own) communicate behind the scene to discuss controversial or problematic terms that have been input by users. The scenarios Bullard describes succinctly indicates the tension between different warrants that classification designers encounter, and that these tensions are not easily surmountable, especially when a classification system is being collaboratively designed, and even more so when it is constantly being developed on-the-fly. Whilst not the general focus of Bullard's research, this particular paper impresses upon the reader the fluid nature of collaborative classification design and how it can successfully work. Unlike official classification systems, created by professional bodies, the curated folksonomy described in her work, and seen on sites such as AO3, is not monolithic and does not take years to implement changes. Its workers are passionate, expert volunteers. Interviews with AO3's tag wranglers (presented in section 5.8.2 of this thesis) show that whilst their curated folksonomy is under strain, it is nevertheless a successful system that, for the most part, works well and effectively both preserves *and* standardises the terms created by its users (i.e. the fan community). When one considers the vast size and granularity of the folksonomy AO3 is a stunning achievement, blending all four warrants to build a classification system that both serves its community well and generally describes content accurately.

Lastly, Bullard's research has discussed the ways in which the kind of collaborative information work seen in her fanfiction repository can be used to inform the creation of other participatory online projects such as Galaxy Zoo and Wikipedia (2016). Her textual analysis of these project training documents and guides has discovered that these tend to focus on

collaborative procedures as work – work which, moreover, is behind-the-scenes and thus invisible. This is in contrast to her studied fanfiction repository, which posits classification work as fun, pleasurable, and is recognised by the community as the efforts of volunteers with a particular expertise. There is still a relative dearth of research within the literature acknowledging the important role that fun, passion, obsession and play have in motivating volunteers to take part in collaborative projects. Activities such as classifying galaxies by shape, editing a wiki article, or standardising an obscure fandom term can be monotonous in the extreme – so why are so many people doing it? Scholarship should perhaps move away from regarding these activities from the sole standpoint of something which constitutes labour, and instead employ Stebbins' (1992) approach of serious leisure as a way to understand why people such as amateur experts, enthusiasts and fans engage in this type of activity.

Thus far, Bullard's work has been important inasmuch as it lays the groundwork for discerning whether new models of fan-created classification, such as curated folksonomies, can be implemented in other established, institution-based crowdsourcing projects. Nevertheless, there are tensions where such curated folksonomies are concerned, as made clear in Dalton (2012), whose case study of AO3 revealed that many users desired a kind of 'tagging training' to discourage the less structured, "Tumblr-style tagging" which is "a more jokey and less traditionally informative style of tagging" (p.89), and which more effectively labels the affect or task-based context of a particular piece of creative work. Kem (2005) has also highlighted a tension within fan communities between better accessibility of fanworks (particularly fanfiction), and the "sovereignty" of the community, with regards to the collaboration of fans and LIS professionals in the cataloguing of fanfiction.

Thus far, other fan-related research in LIS appears to have focused on online gaming or virtual world communities[38]. Adams (2009) looks at the information behaviour and meaning-making strategies of fans and players of the now-defunct MMORPG[39], *City of Heroes*, using ethnographic methods and implementing a dramaturgical approach to examine the sociologically performative and symbolic interactions gamers engage in. Adams uses as her framework Savoleinan's (1995) everyday life information seeking (ELIS) model, which focuses on the social and sense-making aspects of everyday information behaviours. Her game players were highly social, discussing various facets of the game via web forums and in-world environments. *City of Heroes* presented gamers with an environment populated by superheroes and supervillains, of which the gamer must customise their own hero and their superpowers. The game involved gaining experience and improving character strength and abilities; going on missions; joining super-powered teams with other gamers; saving the city from certain villains; or engaging in personal trials. Naturally gamers would cluster together in online spaces to share tips and hints, or to "retrieve information in order to solve problems or make sense of situations" (p.688). Indeed, Adams found that in seeking to satisfy their anomalous state of knowledge (ASK), players preferred informal sources to the formal ones provided by NCsoft, the publisher of *City of Heroes*. Information-seeking activities were usually serendipitous and opportunistic, and sometimes unsolicited. Much of the information communication chain in this context focused around the game community itself, i.e. from gamer to gamer, rather than from game environment to gamer, or from NCsoft to gamer. This fluid method of information exchange and engagement reinforced the social dimensions of community and the sense of immediacy that a gameplay manual or instruction booklet can ill provide.

[38] Celia Pearce (2011) discusses the complex differences between goal-based online gaming worlds and more sandbox, free-world orientated virtual worlds in her book, *Communities of play: emergent cultures in multiplayer games and virtual worlds* (pp.24-30).

[39] Massively multiplayer online role-playing game.

Adams' research led her to conclude that gamers (mostly young adults, though some older people as well) were participating in a newer form of information seeking, one that largely bypasses official gatekeepers and favours informal sources. In a library context, Adams encourages a push towards more multifaceted methods of information provision, and questions whether LIS practitioners are effectively reaching this core of information seekers and helping them to make sense of that information when they find it (p.692).

Similarly, Nyman (2010) has researched the information behaviour of fans of another MMORPG, the widely popular *World of Warcraft*. *WoW,* as it is known to fans of the game, is similar to *City of Heroes* in that it allows players to freely roam a virtual fantasy world as a hero (or indeed a villain) of any number of races (e.g. human, elf, orc etc.) and encourages social behaviours such as joining bands or guilds in order to complete quests or missions. Like Adams, Nyman found that *WoW* players preferred to circumvent official information sources. Due to the nature of the game, where subjects interact with the environment visually, gamers favoured online video tutorials or illustrated walkthroughs when finding out how to defeat a boss or discover where to find secret items.

Nyman also pointed out that player's information-seeking strategies were very much tied to the game itself, inasmuch as *WoW* possesses one of the largest player and fan communities of any MMORPG, and thus its fan-generated digital resources are many and numerous, perhaps more so than many other games. Over time, and as the game has increased in popularity, gamers have been treated to a growing range of information sources to choose from. One of the most popular is Wowhead[40], a user-generated database whose material canvasses the entirety of the game and its related world. In fact, Wowhead is so comprehensive that one fan told Nyman it was "WoW's Google" (p.29).

Nyman is well aware of the *WoW's* 'special status':

[40] http://www.wowhead.com/

> An interesting aspect to take into account is if the behaviour would be different in another MMORPG. World of Warcraft is the largest MMORPG to date and as such its community is also one of the largest. This means that there [are] millions of players that as a collective whole can generate information (in one way or another) which can be structured and made available. So the range of available sources is possibly much larger than in an MMORPG of a smaller magnitude. It's equally plausible that in its infancy, the information behaviour within World of Warcraft was quite different (p.29).

More recently, and building on research such as Nyman (2010) and Adams (2009), Sköld et al (2015) have developed an approach for studying information behaviour (or practices, as they call it) within videogaming communities, which they call the "Analyzing games as information systems-approach". This involves looking at games, and their ancillary materials, from a documentation view; looking for sites of interaction between players, and exploring their meaning-making activities; and examining the game's information retrieval system. Their research elucidated four points of interconnection between games and information: 1) artifacts, documents, information infrastructures and information systems; 2) activities; 3) knowledge, and 4) context (Sköld et al 2015, p.69). The growing body of research on information in videogaming illustrates that there is some interest in developing LIS's knowledge of information behaviour within serious leisure domains.

Another serious leisure domain in which we see fan information behaviour is that of celebrity fandom. Lee et al (2013) have researched the information behaviour of fans of Korean celebrities, and what motivates the ways in which they acquire, disseminate and produce information. Their study found that there were multiple layers of motivation, namely: a need to belong; a need for approval; a need for uniqueness; reference group compliance (which refers to an individual adhering to the cultural norms of their community or reference group [p.753]), and; sensation-seeking. These findings would suggest that there are basic motivators of information acquisition, dissemination and production within fandom, but it must be borne in mind that Lee et al's research is based on a small-scale study conducted in a

non-Western-based (i.e. Korean) context. Whether these findings might extend to other (Western-based) fandoms would be interesting and is also a goal of the present research.

These studies highlight the highly flexible and protean information architectures that develop around certain domains. These information domains (Hjørland 2002) develop their own idiosyncratic 'information cultures' – e.g. in the instance of health informatics, one may witness specialist classification systems, ontologies and terminologies; and domain members approach and access information in certain ways. But domains might also be termed rhizomatic structures, in that each domain may splinter off into further branches that form and implement their own informational schemas. Thus fans of *City of Heroes* may create, disseminate and seek information differently from *World of Warcraft* fans. We can therefore assume that there is a great deal of heterogeneity in information behaviour between fandoms. The purpose of this research, however, is to locate and identify any generalities – if any – that might be extrapolated from the information behaviours of digital cult media fan communities as a whole. Thus this thesis attempts to integrate the disparate characteristics of each community into a single, coherent conceptual model of cult media fan information behaviour.

2.2.3.3. Summary

From the literature analysis, several main themes were developed which were then used as the basis for the Delphi study. These themes are outlined in the Delphi section of this thesis (see pp.139-140). To conclude, the following points summarise what has been learned thus far about the information behaviour of fans:

Objective	Section 2.2. findings
1. To better understand the information behaviour of a unique group of people and therefore better plan information services and/or architectures.	• Fans tend to bypass official sources of knowledge and will turn to other fans (Adams 2009) or fan-created information resources (Nyman 2010) instead. • Fans are motivated by a sense of belonging, for uniqueness, approval, to adhere to community norms, and sensation-seeking (Lee et al 2013).
2. To investigate fanwork collections, their place as cultural products, and how fans create, disseminate, promote, organise, access and preserve them.	• New 'hybrid' semi-controlled taxonomies are being created in the context of fanworks, such as AO3's 'curated folksonomy' (Bullard 2014). • Fandoms spawn their own information domains (Hjørland 2002) and develop their own custom-made suite of classification systems, taxonomies, ontologies, etc. • Little to no official bibliographical standards exist for fanworks or fan information in LIS (Hart et al 1999; see Appendix A, p.332). • Bibliographical standards amongst fans and fan communities are sophisticated and highly organised (Hart et al 1999). • Fans are interested in the preservation of their own works and are making concerted efforts to do so (Versaphile 2011).
3. To explore whether fan information behaviour can be generalised to, and whether it can inform, other domains, including LIS, the publishing and media industries, education, and copyright law.	• Fans develop their own editing and reviewing practices, such as beta-reading (Black 2008; Gee and Hayes 2010). • Experienced fans engage in mentorship and the passing on of skills to novice fans (Gee and Hayes 2010; Black 2008). • Participatory fan practices such as produsage (Bruns, 2008; 2006) and the creation of UGC are encouraged by the media and cultural industries (Jenkins 2006b). • Busse and Gray (2011) question the agency of fans and discuss whether they are being exploited by the media industries. • Fans are ambivalent towards copyright issues (Harrington and Bielby 1995).

Table 9: Summary of section 2.2. findings, linked to thesis objectives.

2.3. The information behaviour of fans

To reiterate what has been previously discussed (see section 2.2.3.2), the information behaviour of fans has, so far, been a relatively neglected area of library and information studies. This is not unusual in a field that has developed from formal information and knowledge networks, in contrast to informal ones – as David (2007) notes:

> The dynamic between accredited or expert knowledge and informal or practice-based knowledge has been a persistent focus of science studies [… F]ormal representations of knowledge flows […] rarely provide adequate descriptions of how knowledge circulates within institutions (p.177).

This is a problem not merely within formal institutions, but also, David opines, within "social systems", and "online knowledge communities" are important because they are not merely "microcosms of these larger social systems but new formations within and in continuity with them" (David 2007, p.193).

One might then question why these fan knowledge communities (and other 'amateur' knowledge communities, for that matter) been given comparatively little consideration in the LIS literature thus far. Hart et al (1999) were of the opinion that this is because "there is prejudice against fans and fan information among librarians. Fans are often viewed as 'different to us', indulging in activities that are at best deviant or at worst dangerous" (p.82). Whilst this is a hypothesis, other work in the field of fan studies (such as that by Jenson 1992) would seem to suggest that such assumptions are not entirely inaccurate.

Numerous studies into fan behaviour highlight the unique relationship fans have with information. Hart et al (1999) note that fans "create and manage printed and electronic" resources, engaging in a type of bibliographic control that is outside of professional channels. Importantly, they identify and locate fan literature as a "largely unexplored branch of grey literature", equating it with other resources produced outside of the mainstream publishing industry, such as government leaflets, pamphlets, guides, reports, theses, programmes and other similar materials. These, and other types of ephemera, often lie outside traditional

bibliographical structure, but can be important as they are invaluable in informing the user of the cultural or historical background of a certain period or institution. No doubt the status of fan literature as an unacknowledged branch of grey literature has contributed to its neglect by library and information practitioners.

Nevertheless, more recent studies by Bullard (2014) and Dalton (2012) have begun to look specifically at the amateur classification and indexing structures used in fanfiction repositories. This is a growing area of study with little literature to its name, and the findings are not yet clear enough to draw firm conclusions. However, current results suggest that much of this 'amateur classification' is done in a voluntary capacity because fans have a personal stake in it or they find it "fun" (Bullard 2014); and that currently social-tagging (or fan-tagging) works "really well" (Dalton 2012).

To sum up the findings presented both here and in sections 2.2.3.1 and 2.2.3.2, there are two points that we can make with regards to the information behaviour of fans:

- Fan information is created, managed and distributed by fans themselves, bypassing traditional avenues, authorities and controls;
- As attested by the literature, information behaviour is a significant and inherent component of fandom and fan activities, but it has rarely been investigated in an LIS context.

Such traits may be found in groups that are similar to fans, namely amateurs, enthusiasts and hobbyists; and the information behaviours of these groups have been more extensively studied within LIS, most notably from Stebbins' Serious Leisure Perspective (1992). These include amateur photographers (Cox, Clough and Marlow 2008), amateur gourmet cooks (Hartel 2010) and music record collectors (Margree et al 2014); and other papers related to the information behaviour of hobbyists can be found in Lee and Trace (2009), Skov (2013) and Kostagiolas et al (2015), to name but a few. Whilst it cannot be definitively be stated (as yet) that the behaviours of fans and hobbyists etc. are identical, it is believed that there are

enough points of similarity between these groups that they can be usefully compared with regards to relevant methodological and conceptual approaches.

2.3.1. Relevant models of information behaviour

Models, as Case (2012) explains, "typically focus on more specific problems than do theories" (p.134), and are usually illustrative of the particular rather than the general (hence the connection between information behaviour models and user studies, as discussed in section 1.6). A model "describes relationships among concepts but is tied more closely to the real world" (Case 2012, p.134), and is used to test hypotheses about what we observe in everyday life. Rather than theory, models seek to explain practice, and can be either explanatory or descriptive of practice (Ford 2015). Whilst models can be weak in that they may not sufficiently illustrate complex processes and behaviours, they are nevertheless useful in clearly presenting key elements of a process within a more well-defined context, that may later lead to a more generalizable theory. Indeed, as empirical research is continued, models may be modified in order to better represent known phenomena (Ford 2015, p.142).

It should be borne in mind that, as mentioned in section 1.6, the view of information behaviour taken in this thesis is a broad one that has not traditionally been demonstrated in most models of information behaviour, although this does not imply that existing models of information behaviour are not useful in this case. Because information behaviour relies on the context that it exists in, there may well be previous models that explore information behaviour within contexts that are similar to, if not identical, to fandom and fan communities. Thus, in order to best study fans and their information behaviour, it is useful firstly to see whether any prior model of fan information behaviour exists (it does not); and secondly, whether there are any existing models that can be mapped onto the information behaviour of fans, partially if not wholly.

Since no prior model of fan information behaviour exists, this section seeks to give a brief overview of relevant models. The following models were chosen because they reflected

at least some aspect of fan information behaviour, as ascertained from the literature review. None reflected all these aspects in their totality, only in certain features or characteristics of the model as a whole. These features are as follows:

1. An acknowledgement that information behaviour is driven by context;
2. A focus on leisure or non-work contexts;
3. A focus on the cyclical aspects of information behaviour, such as user production and produsage;
4. Information providers, users and information itself are all given equal emphasis;
5. A focus on the creative, ludic or performative aspects of information use.

The following sections give an overview of these models, with an aim towards synthesising pertinent details into an integrated conceptual model of fan information behaviour. The models are categorised first as LIS or non-LIS models; they are then listed in chronological order.

2.3.1.1. LIS models

2.3.1.1.1 Wilson's model of information behaviour (Wilson 1981; 1996)

Wilson's 1981 model sought to move away from a focus on information systems and sources that was prevalent in earlier information behaviour studies, and to bring human information behaviour to the fore. This was achieved by addressing the psychological, sociological and cultural factors that drive individual information needs, and the contexts in which these needs are satisfied. In a 1996 update, Wilson addressed those contexts which *prevent* individual's fulfilling their information needs, and also brought in theories from marketing, decision-making theory, psychology, innovation and health communication research (Wilson 2000; 1999). These enabled Wilson to widen the scope of his original model and make it a "richer source of hypotheses and further research" (1999, p.257).

In the context of this thesis, Wilson's model is useful in that it focuses on the human context of information behaviour and takes into account individual experience in the satisfaction of an anomalous state of knowledge (ASK). In so doing, Wilson has taken a multi-disciplinary approach and drawn from an array of subject domains. But this strength is also the theory's weakness, for it must by necessity ignore many other domains that may be of relevance. With regards to this thesis – in which a multi-disciplinary approach is also necessary – the fields of media and cultural studies have traditionally given most attention to fan behaviours (Evans and Stasi 2014), and thus are perhaps more appropriate stances from which to approach fan information behaviour. But these are disciplines that have no part in Wilson's model.

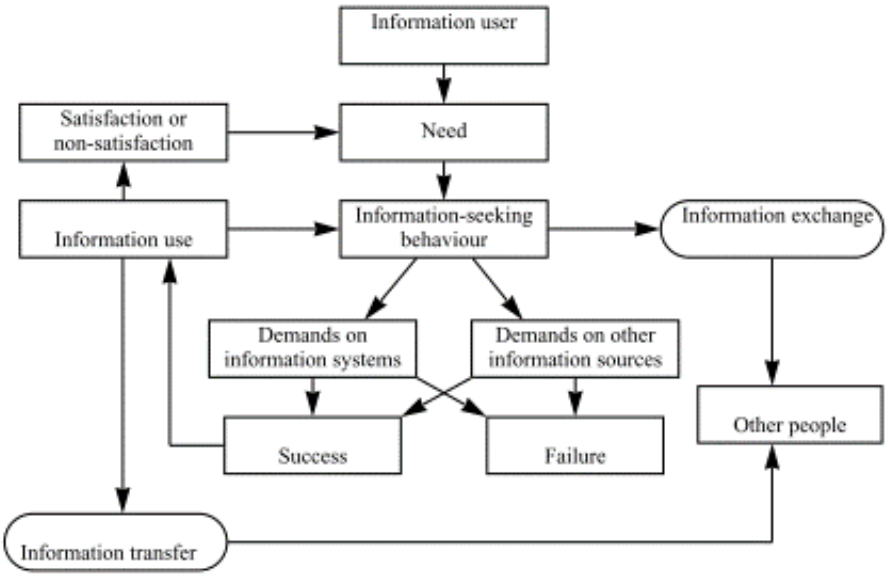


Figure 4: Wilson's model of information behaviour. Source: Wilson (1999).

It is because of this that Wilson's model does not incorporate concepts that are related to information behaviour but that had their roots in other fields, such as media studies and fan studies, concepts such as participatory culture (Jenkins [1992] 2013), produsage (Bruns 2008; 2006) and commons-based peer production (Benkler and Nissenbaum 2006). These concepts tackle collaborative forms of production which include (but do not focus on) participatory

information behaviours between large groups of people, usually on the internet, and on artefacts that are essentially works-in-progress. In these models, it is useless to speak of a linear model where information needs are either met or not; information behaviours are instead cyclical, and entry points to these models need not start with an information need (see Blandford and Attfield 2010).

It is therefore clear that Wilson's model – whilst useful in its focus on the human-driven aspects of information behaviour – is not appropriate in applying to the *specific* information behaviours of fan communities.

2.3.1.1.2 Everyday Life Information Seeking (ELIS) (Savolainen 1995)

The ELIS model is embedded in the everyday lives of participants, looking at how their information behaviours are dictated by social and cultural factors. The *way of life* of individuals is a primary focus, and the concept of the *habitus* describes the schemas and patterns individuals use to perform certain functions in their everyday lives and thus aids in maintaining *mastery of life* (i.e. the tackling of problems in everyday life using those schemas and patterns developed in one's *habitus* – similar to genres). ELIS looks at how the *habitus* informs the information behaviour of individuals and thus affects their *mastery of life*. ELIS also takes a holistic view as it incorporates the entire landscape of an individual's life into the framework. This includes a) personal values and attitudes; b) material capital; c) social capital; d) cultural capital and e) current situation in life. All these affect choices made in information behaviour, and likewise are informed by these behaviours and their eventual outcomes.

This model is pertinent as it takes into account not just the work-related information behaviour of individuals but also their leisure- or hobby-related behaviour. This is useful as 'fan work' is usually identified by fans as being a source of pleasure in their private lives, one that takes place away from the context of work or family life (e.g. Jenkins [1992] 2013). It is therefore intensely personal, and one might assume that personal interests and passions would inform the values and attitudes one might apply to their everyday lives. Indeed, in his

study of the information behaviour of teachers and industrial workers, Savoleinan (1995) found that, regarding those information behaviours related to hobbies, differences in an individual's *way of life* made the most impact (i.e. teachers were more likely to engage in literary pursuits, whilst workers more in handicrafts).

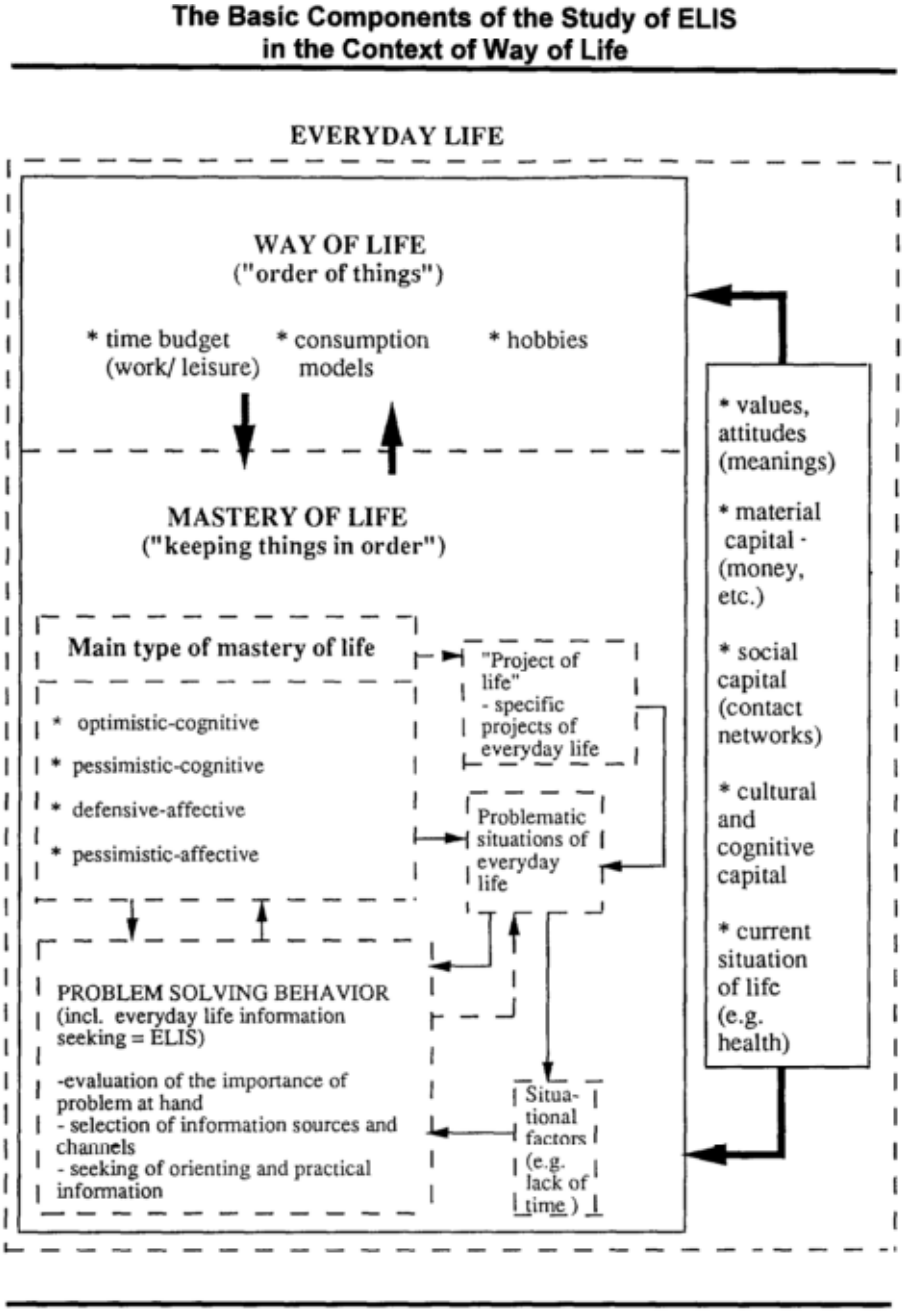


Figure 5: The ELIS model. Source: Savoleinan (1995).

Savoleinan's research also highlights how people tend to give preference to informal sources of information, particularly personal communication, which relates to the importance of social capital in one's *way of life* and *mastery of life*. ELIS also favours qualitative methods and the context-sensitive collection of data, as the focus on everyday activities and personal values and habits necessitates careful tailoring of a study to individual situations and problems.

In light of this, Savoleinan's model appears to have some relevance to the study to fans, particularly when considering a focus on how belonging to a fandom affects one's information behaviour. Also of relevance are the concepts of social and cultural capital, as these play a large part not only in the information behaviours of fans, but also in the building of social interactions and, by extension, fan communities themselves (D'Amato 2014; Nyman 2011).

2.3.1.1.3. Hektor's information activities model (Hektor 2001)

Hektor's approach to information behaviour, as outlined in his 2001 monograph, depicts a core of general information behaviour 'modes' – seeking, gathering, communicating and giving – surrounded by eight associated information activities (see Figure 6). While the core information behaviour 'modes' and most of the information activities are well-known concepts in information behaviour research, some are novel and require explaining. In particular, the 'unfold', 'dress', 'instruct' and 'publish' activities are new concepts, and bear some relationship to Robinson's information communication chain (see Figure 1, p.13). Unfolding refers to engagement with information, be it reading, listening, or watching, and usually requires sustained activity. Dressing refers to a process in which "thoughts, ideas, facts and pieces of knowledge are dressed in signs and symbols, words and text, images and pictures, and physical expressions. […] Whereas unfolding is information input, dressing is the information output. Dressing is the act of packing information in symbols, signs and images to make public and share with others, or to keep in a photo album, a diary or any other private repository" (Hektor 2001, p.87). Instructing is an information output, but whereas dressing

may be reciprocal, instructing is usually unidirectional, for a specific purpose, and for the consumption of an anonymous 'other'. Lastly, publishing refers to the publication of information, although this includes posting informally in a blog, taking out an ad in a local paper, or writing a customer review. Information that has been dressed and/or is for instructional purposes may be published. An in-depth discussion of these activities can be found in Hektor (2001, section 4.4.1).

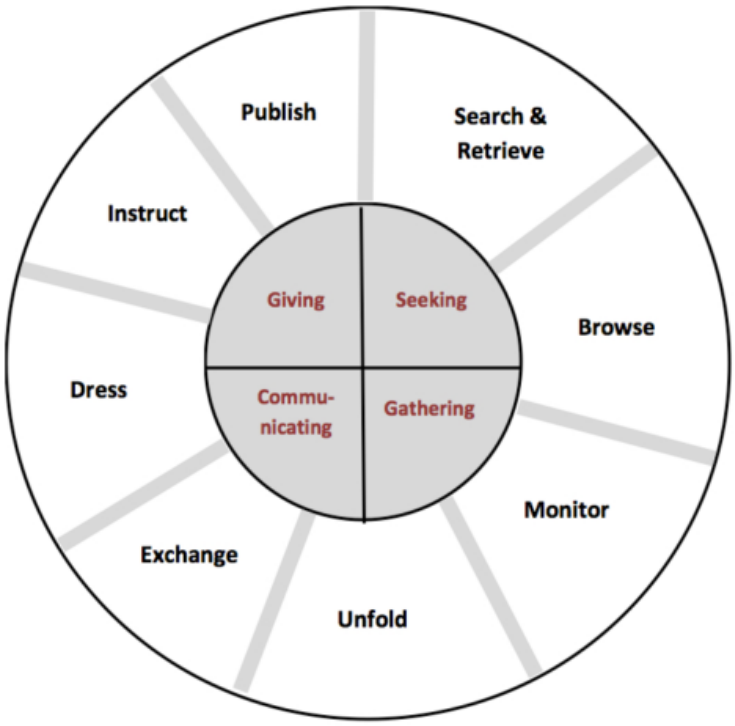


Figure 6: Hektor's information activities model (2001). Source: Hartel et al. (2016).

"Dressing, instructing, and publishing," Hartel et al (2016) explain, "are all forms of information use and creation, and establish unequivocally that people can be capable, productive, prolific creators and distributors of information, too" (n.p.). In this sense the model is relevant to fan information behaviour. Hektor's model looks at information behaviour through the lens of "the problem domains and projects of everyday life-activities" (90) – like Savoleinan's model (see section 2.3.1.1.2), everyday life is at the centre of our individual information behaviours. Leisure, as we will discuss, is one of those everyday instances where information is encountered (see section 2.3.1.2.1), and fan activities might be

considered one of Hektor's 'projects' in that they may take the form of a lengthy and sustained creative process (e.g. writing a fanfic; drawing fanart; creating a wiki; putting together a vid). I would posit that many of these fan projects are heavily focused on 'dressing' information, in reconstituting and remixing both the source text with "signs and symbols, words and text, images and pictures, and physical expressions" that ultimately become new works (fanworks) in their own right.

2.3.1.1.4. Information grounds (Fisher 2005)

Spontaneous information exchange becomes the focus of temporary groups that form in response to a specific event or purpose. The site of this social gathering then becomes an *information ground*. Information exchange is usually serendipitous and casual, and is lost once the group disperses (although it may reform when the group meets again e.g. at an academic conference or a fan convention). This model, however, seems to expressly focus on physical locations; although it is possible to apply this to the internet, where temporary produsage communities may form around a certain project, such as the creation of a resource guide or game walkthrough. Modifying this model to include online as well as offline groups would be possible, and could prove to be beneficial in modelling the information behaviour of online fan communities.

2.3.1.1.5. The Information Journey (Blandford and Attfield 2010)

The "information journey" model also attempts to present a more holistic view of information behaviour, encouraging a move away from models that focus solely on parts of the information chain, and towards a model which incorporates all stages of that chain.

This framework also takes into account other information interactions which are less well-studied – for example, the influence of sense-making and serendipity on information behaviour. This model is useful in that it takes a broader view of information behaviour, allowing for the more complex information interactions observed in everyday life. The model

is cyclical, assuming the reuse or regeneration of information – or indeed, the continued use of information in different ways over prolonged periods. The information user may enter the cycle at any stage – for example, a serendipitous discovery implies an entry into the information journey at the 'Find information' stage, rather than the 'Recognise need' stage.

The information journey is also useful in that it attempts to embed information within the personal life of the user – specifically, the physical, social and temporal situation of the user during any one information journey. A journey is defined by its context: where it takes place, the social structure or community of practice within which the user is situated at the time, and when and for what length of time it takes place. Information journeys take place for a variety of reasons; and users are adaptable beings, capable of evolving their information behaviour to suit a certain activity at a certain time, perhaps even becoming information gatekeepers in certain spheres. The flow of the information cycle may also work in both directions: for example, when writing a thesis a student may seek validation by going back to the finding information stage in order to bolster their interpretation of the facts.

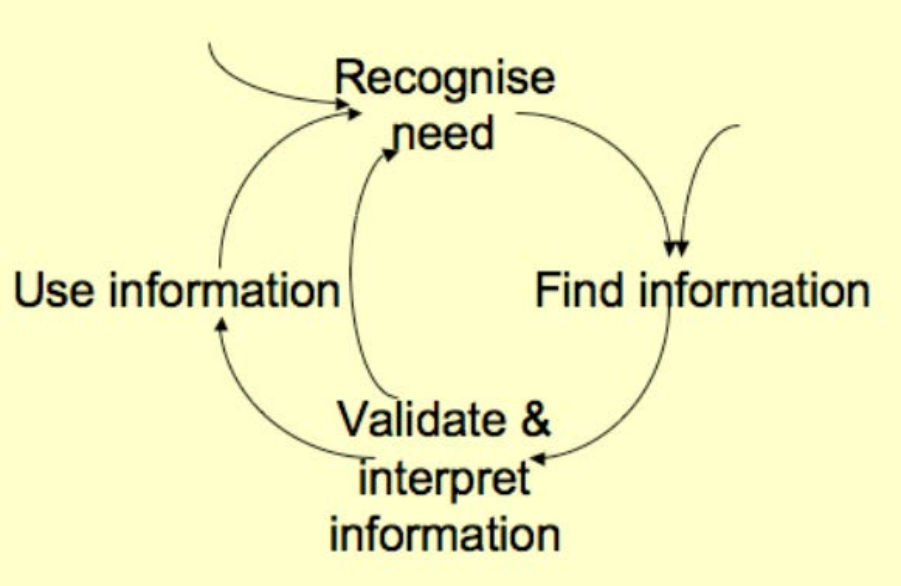


Figure 7: The information journey. Source: Blandford (n.d.)

Whilst similar to other cyclical models such as Brown and Quan-Haase (2012) and Curlew's (2007), the information journey framework does not take into account the more complex, dialogic structures of information exchange such as may be found in new media (such as social media, videogaming, wikis, etc.). It is, however, general enough that it can be applied to many different types of information tasks or contexts, and this is its greatest strength, giving it a much wider range of application.

2.3.1.1.6. Information-seeking and communication model (ISCM) (Robson and Robinson 2013)

The ISCM model seeks to synthesise models of information seeking behaviour and the communication chain. This model is relevant to this thesis inasmuch as it takes a more rounded approach to information behaviours, encompassing those of not only the user, but also the provider. Importantly, it also takes account of the information products that are produced by that provider, and sought and/or consumed by the user. Thus all the vital actors that will be encountered in the models by Brown and Quan-Haase (2012) and Curlew (2004) are also integral to this model.

The benefit of ISCM is that it is grounded in LIS theory, and is thus more suited to the LIS-based approach of this thesis. Through a systematic review of information-seeking models in LIS, Robson and Robinson sought to extrapolate a more generalised model that would find applicability in a wider context. Simultaneously, by merging information-seeking and communication models, it focuses not merely on the information user, but also on the information provider. This allows for a more in-depth, cyclical view of information flows, and the factors that instigate information seeking amongst users. These factors include the psychological state of the user; their environment; their expertise; and their cultural background. These are all factors which figure strongly in the fan experience, as much fan activity is very much emotion-driven (see Jenkins 2013 [1992]; Busse and Gray 2011; Bacon-Smith (1992) etc.).

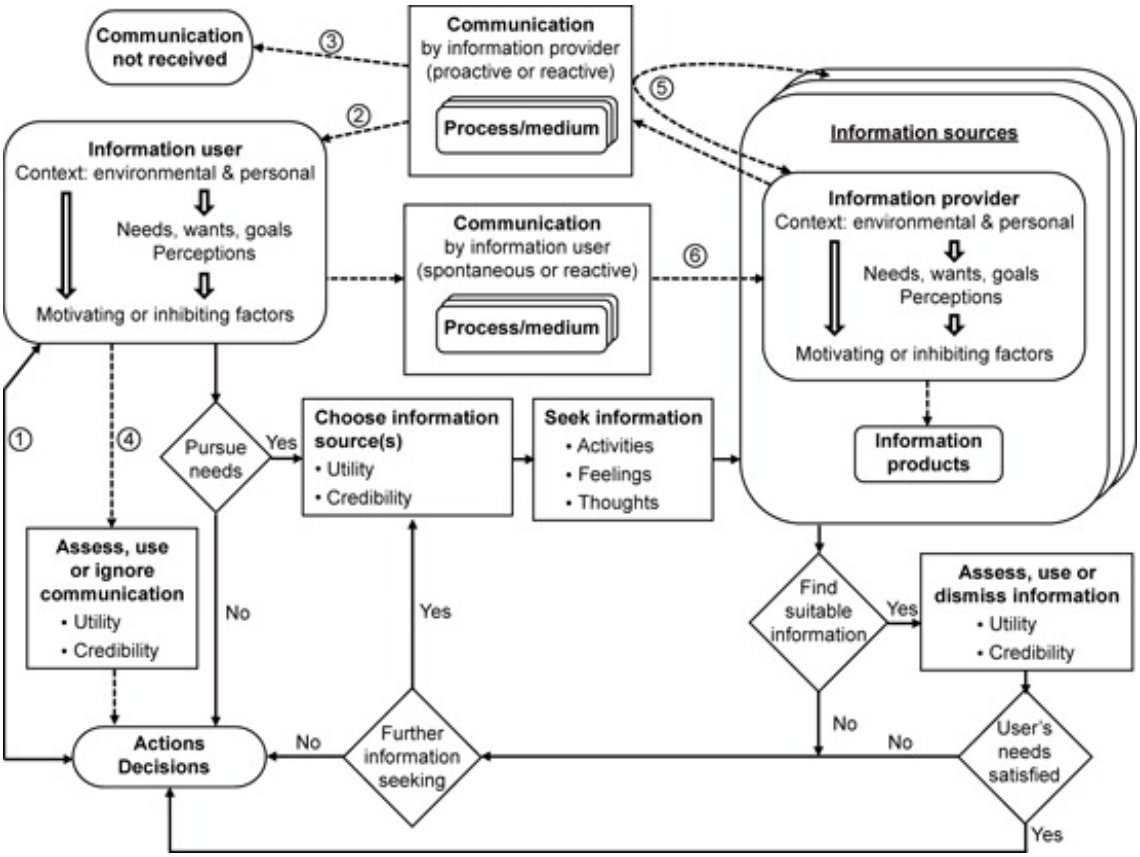


Figure 8: Information-seeking and communication model (ISCM). Source: Robson and Robinson (2013).

2.3.1.2. Non-LIS models

2.3.1.2.1. The Serious Leisure Perspective (Stebbins 2001)

This perspective looks at the behaviours of amateurs, hobbyists or volunteers who pursue interests at what might be considered professional levels (in terms of complexity, man hours and depth of knowledge or experience) but without remuneration. Nevertheless they may hold considerable social and knowledge capital in their fields. Stebbins also acknowledges the importance of Serious Leisure in the Information Age, in terms of its community- and network-building affordances, and the sense of identity it can confer on individuals (Stebbins 2001, p,55).

This model has successfully been applied to the field of LIS in previous studies such as Hartel's (2010) investigation of the information behaviours of gourmet cooking enthusiasts, and Margree et al's (2014) similar study into music record collectors.

However – perhaps surprisingly – Stebbins does not consider fans as part of the Serious Leisure perspective, instead classing them with passive audiences and spectators of the social world that Serious Leisure 'practitioners' are a part of (e.g. events, organisations, conferences, networks etc.) (Stebbins 2001, p.54). This is anomalous because in terms of dedication to, depth and breadth of knowledge of, and positive participation in a chosen domain, it can be said that fans are at least the equals of amateurs, volunteers and hobbyists. For decades fans have participated in large-scale conventions, sophisticated networks and amateur press associations with little to no remunerative rewards; and they have been shown to display rich levels of knowledge in their chosen fandom. There is such a level of overlap between Stebbins' SL practitioners and fans, in fact, that the Serious Leisure paradigm may as easily be applied to them as to hobbyists, amateurs and volunteers.

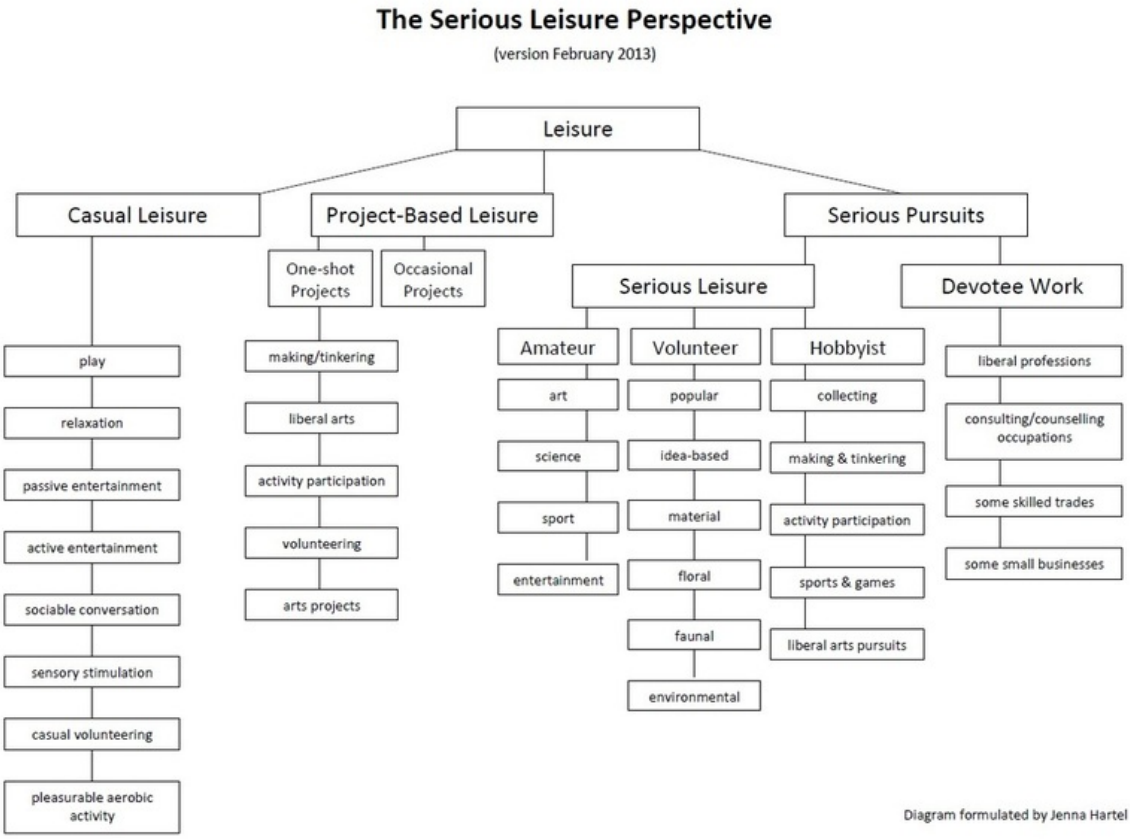


Figure 9: The Serious Leisure Perspective, as formulated by Hartel (2013). Source: The Serious Leisure Perspective Wesbite, www.seriousleisure.net

2.3.1.2.2. The ecology of online Sims communities (Curlew 2004)

Whilst not a model of information behaviour, this model has been included as it adequately depicts the cyclical produsage activities of fan communities, in particular the fan community that has grown up around *The Sims* videogame. In many ways, this model exemplifies the remediative engagement of fans with a source text.

Figure 10 shows the cyclical flow of artefacts produced in *The Sims* community. The raw tools and materials are provided by the producer, in this case the videogame company, EA/Maxis. The fan community then uses these to create mods, or modifications, to use within the game. These mods are then shared with other gamers, via *The Sims* official website, or via fansites and other unofficial mediums.

This cycle can also be applied to wider fan communities, inasmuch as:

- A source 'text' is provided by a producer.
- The fan community reappropriates and modifies the source text, so creating fanworks.
- Fanworks are distributed either through unofficial channels (e.g. fansites, fan repositories, email, P2P networks, etc.), or through official channels (e.g. company-endorsed BBS's or fora, published works licensed by the copyright holders, Kindle Worlds, etc.).

Curlew's model is particularly reminiscent of Brown and Quan-Haase's (2012) model in its acknowledgement of produsedartefacts as integral to the model as a whole. It also recognises the cyclical nature of information and communication flows within fan communities, the dialogic nature that exists between producers and consumers, and the active role of consumers as produsers.

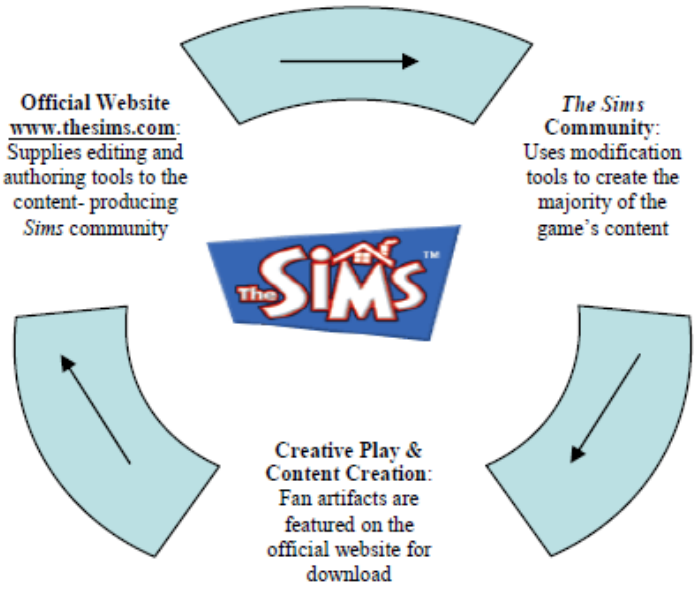


Figure 10: Ecology of online Sims communities. Source: Curlew (2004).

2.3.1.2.3. "A Worker's Inquiry 2.0" (Brown and Quan-Haase 2012)

This ethnographic framework is based on Marx's Worker's Inquiry perspective, wherein factory workers were asked a series of questions about their exploitation in the workplace, with the express intention of bringing them to an awareness of the social, cultural, economic and political implications of their experiences as workers (Brown and Quan-Haase 2012, p.491). A Worker's Inquiry 2.0 links this method to Web 2.0 and Bruns' 'produsage' concept (2008; 2006), seeking to engage produsers in thinking about their relationship with their work, their communities and the websites that exploit their work (e.g. sites like YouTube, Flickr and MySpace would no longer exist without the user-generated content of produsers). Brown and Quan-Haase's theory also highlights the *created artefacts* themselves as informing the produsage process and the behaviour of produsers themselves. Whereas Marx's original inquiry engaged only the workers, Brown and Quan-Haase's also looks at a) the community and b) the produsedartefacts as inherent to the produsage process as a whole. The Marxist underpinnings of this framework are also relevant in that currently fan studies is showing great interest in the concept of fan labour as a form of exploitation on the part of the media industry (e.g. Chin 2014; Jones 2014a).

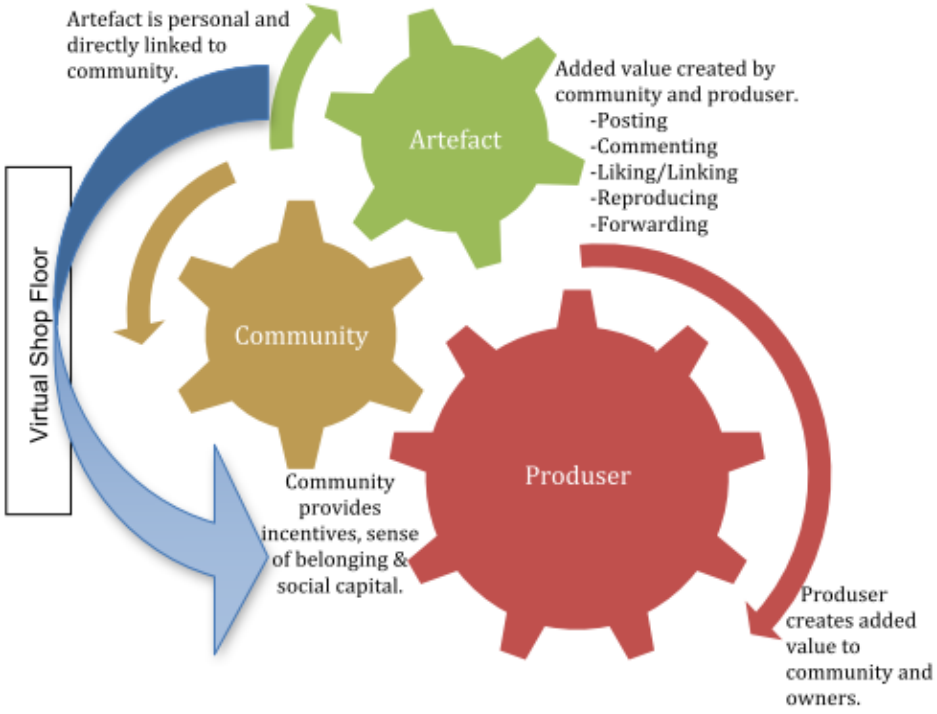


Figure 12: Cyclical model of consumption and production (produsage). Source: Brown & Quan-Haase (2012).

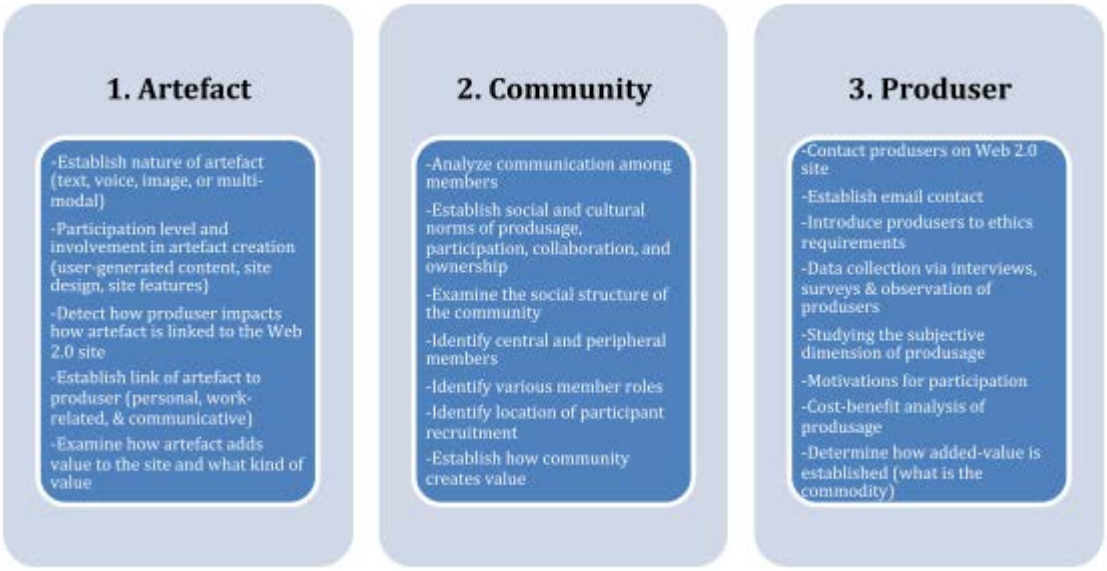


Figure 11: Framework for examining 'A Workers Inquiry 2.0'. Source: Brown & Quan-Haase (2012).

The advantage of the framework is that it incorporates the idea of consumers as producers, and gives a cyclical view of information consumption and production that seems to represent fan communities very well. It also recognises the importance of information as artefact – information as the 'base material' not simply of text-based, traditional documents,

but as cultural artefacts such as images, music, or multi-modal materials, etc., that enrich communities and are constant works-in-progress.

2.3.2. Summary

From the discussion of the previous models, it can be ascertained that none are wholly adequate when applied to the dynamic range of information behaviours presented by fans. There are, however, elements of these models that appear to be applicable to fan information behaviour, which are listed below:

- The human-driven aspects of information behaviour explicated in the updated Wilson model (2000, 1999) include a multi-disciplinary approach incorporating a range of information domains such as psychological, sociological and cultural factors. These may be extended into the study of fans, their psychological and sociological motivations for building fan communities, and their engagement in produsage activities.
- The ELIS model (Savoleinan 1995) takes into account the leisure- or hobby-related activities of individuals – fan activities are usually related to domains of serious leisure or amateur enthusiasts (Lawrence 2006; Ambercrombie and Longhurst 1998).
- Hektor's (2001) information activities model offers the idea of 'dressing', a type of information activity that involves reconfiguring and reframing information with various media such as text, images, video, physical expression, etc., which appropriately describes the transformative activities inherent in the creation of fanworks.
- The information grounds model (Fisher 2005) features individuals that come together in physical spaces in response to an event, purpose or project which later disperses. Fans in online communities perform similar activities, coming together to work collaboratively on fanworks and dispersing either when they are finished, or when members lose interest.

- Blandford and Attfield's (2010) information journey model presents a simple, cyclical model which takes into account the *context* of user behaviour at all stages of the information chain, allowing a flexible approach to the access, seeking and use of information, which may be applied more readily to the transient, intense and collaborative information behaviours of fans.
- The ISCM model (Robson and Robinson 2013) takes a holistic approach to information behaviour and includes a more cyclical engagement with information seeking and the communication chain, thus linking the information user to the information provider. Fan communities are intimately intertwined with the providers of cult media texts, and this model provides a solid, LIS-based approach to more holistic concepts of fan consumption and production.
- The Serious Leisure Perspective (Stebbins 2001) acknowledges that serious leisure activities are as important to individuals as professional ones, and various studies in LIS using this perspective as a framework have affirmed that serious leisure can affect information behaviours (Margree et al 2014; Hartel 2010; Cox, Clough and Marlow 2008).
- Curlew's model, whilst not an LIS-based approach, is similar to Brown and Quan-Haase's (2012) model inasmuch as it illustrates the dynamic, cyclical dimension of fan production, which involves a symbiotic relationship between producers, fans and fanworks.
- Lastly, Brown and Quan-Haase's "A Worker's Inquiry 2.0" (2012) acknowledges the cyclical aspects of user production and produsage. It also highlights the individual, the community, and the cultural artefact itself as integral to this cycle of production.

Analysis of these models has demonstrated a need for a conceptual model of fan information behaviour. Ideally, this model would incorporate and synthesise the aforementioned points presented above. By synthesising these various aspects, a conceptual

model may be reached that takes into account the dynamic, cyclical and remediative attributes that fans appear to present. Having built this conceptual model, it will become possible to test the hypotheses constructed from the literature review, and thus begin to work toward satisfying the aims and objectives outlined at the start of this thesis.

On the basis of the literature review, two preliminary, test models of fan information behaviour are presented below, which incorporate the characteristics of the aforementioned models which are most applicable to fans. These characteristics are:

1.	*Human-driven* (Wilson 1999; 2000); the context of the user influences or frames the information behaviour of the user (Blandford and Attfield 2010).
2.	*Leisure*- or *hobby*-related (Savoleinan 1995; Stebbins 1992), with significant focus on *dressing* information (Hektor 2001).
3.	The information communication chain is *cyclical, remediative*, and a *work-in-progress* (Brown and Quan-Haase 2012; Blandford and Attfield 2010; Curlew 2007), with *multiple entry points* (Blandford and Attfield 2010).
4.	*Project*- or *purpose*-based (Fisher 2005; Hektor 2001).
5.	*Symbiotic relationship* between producers, fans and fanworks (Curlew 2007); related to relationship between information provider, information users, and information itself (Robson and Robinson 2013).

Table 10: Characteristics of fan information behaviour and relevant models of information behaviour.

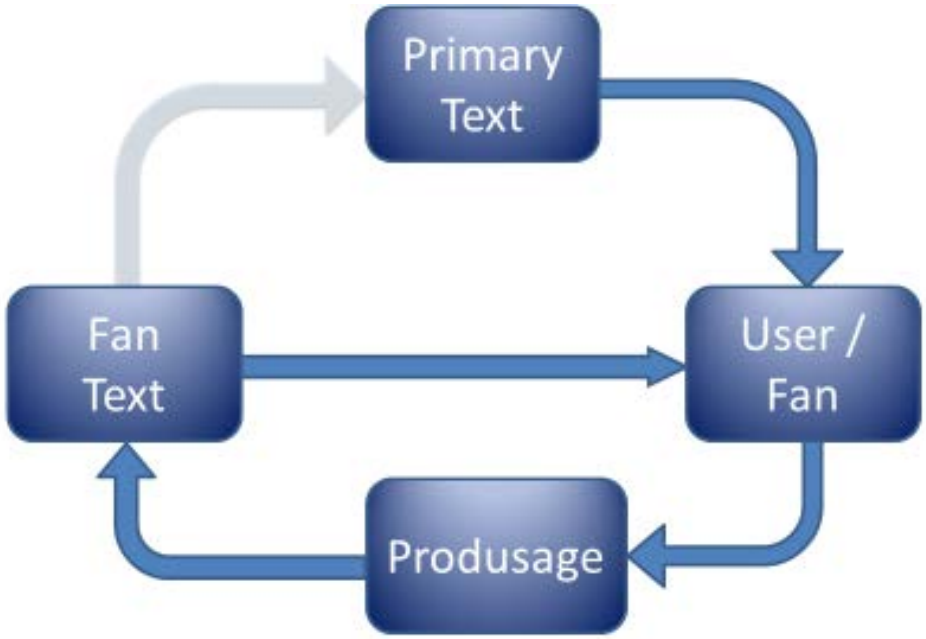


Figure 13: Initial conceptual model of fan information behaviour, November 2014.

Figure 13 depicts an early version of the fan information behaviour model, which was based on an earlier stage of the literature review. As can be seen, this clearly displays the simple, cyclical pattern used in other models such as Blandford and Attfield (2010) and Curlew (2007). This model was, however, felt to be too simplistic and not sufficiently representative of the complexities of fan information behaviour as later explored in the literature review. These additional complexities were incorporated into a later iteration of the model (see Figure 14).

It must be noted that neither of these models were intended to be final, finished products, but representative of the literature review findings at the time. The second model was also subsequently felt to be incomplete, since it did not express the aggregation, management and organisation of the source text as well as the fan text. It was also felt that the empirical work would most likely change or improve the conceptual model, and so a third model was not devised, as it was felt that a more accurate picture would evolve from the findings of the empirical evidence.

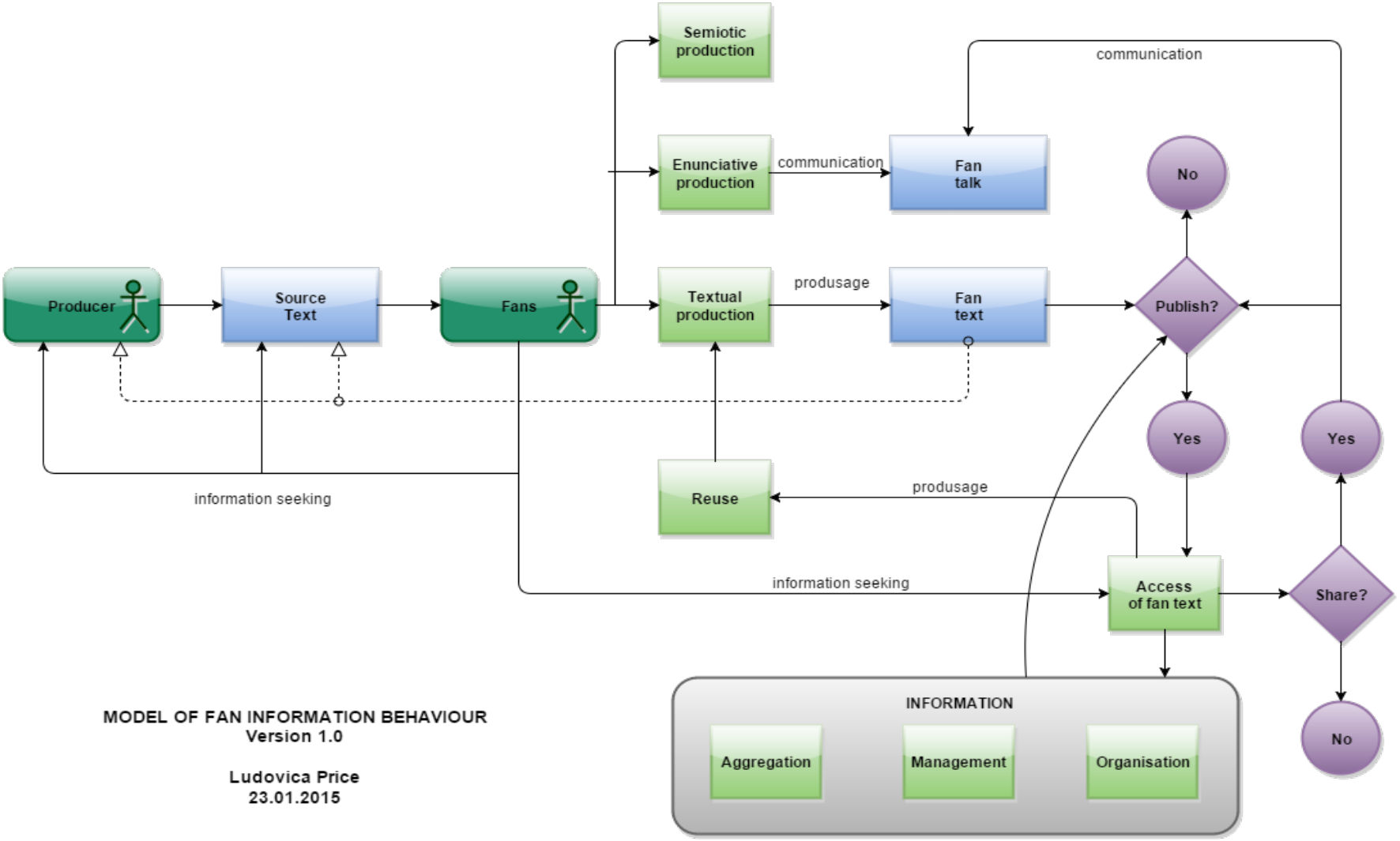


Figure 14: Second conceptual model of fan information behaviour, January 2015.

This model, in large part, answers objectives one and two of this thesis (i.e. 1) To better understand fan information behaviour and; b) to investigate how fans create, disseminate, promote, access and preserve fanworks). It will be tested in the empirical part of this thesis.

2.4. Conclusions

From this literature review it is clear that LIS and fan studies are disparate fields of research that nevertheless have some points of intersection; and this means, in turn, that they have the potential to impact upon one another – fandom as a sub-domain of what might be termed 'serious leisure' (Stebbins 1992), with its own unique information practices; and LIS (specifically information behaviour) as a prism through which fandom may enquire into those very same practices.

There are several points of interconnection between the two disciplines. The first is through the constellation of activities performed (but not uniquely) via the affordances of Web 2.0, with which LIS is particularly concerned in terms of how it enables the information user to participate in and collaborate on the creation of information resources (Beer and Burrows 2010), and which therefore might come under the rubric of 'participatory culture' – practices such as produsage (Bruns 2008) and commons-based peer production (Benkler and Nissenbaum 2006). We have seen from the work of Jones (2014b), Jenkins (2006a, b), Bacon-Smith (1992) and many others that fans are practitioners par excellence in these new forms of consumption and production, and it is these participatory actions – undertaken almost exclusively in an amateur capacity (Jones 2014b), that give the lie to the view that consumers are mere dupes of the media industry, views first espoused by scholars such as Adorno ([1941] 2000), Benjamin ([1936] 2008) and Baudrillard (1994).

Secondly, the fruits of this produsage are twofold: first, they are creative artefacts that are derived from a source text (or canon); and second, they are the structures built in order to

organise both those creative artefacts and knowledge of the canon that they derive from. One output is creative, and the other is what might be called 'encyclopaedic'[41]. Both are what Derecho (2006) terms 'archontic', in that they are based on the concept of the archive – an infinite corpus which includes both the canon and the fantext, one that is a work in progress and is constantly tweaked and added to through the efforts of various amateur individuals. Whilst Derecho does not include the encyclopaedic efforts of fans under this definition (her reference was mainly to fanfiction – 'archontic literature'), it would seem appropriate here to add other, non-creative forms of fanwork to this rubric. For if the creative fruits of fan labour are archontic in the sense that they are part of an ever-expanding archive of fantext, who then is there to organise the archive? From the work of Bullard (2014), Dalton (2012) and Hart et al (1999) we can say that it is the fans themselves that are taking on this role, without any formal training in librarianship or other information professions. They have embraced participatory forms of information organisation such as folksonomies, and even begun to create their own, purpose-built classification systems which Bullard (2014) has termed 'curated folksonomies'. Not only this, but strategies for obtaining information are sophisticated and, crucially, informal – fans create their own information 'hubs', sharing hints and tips, and even becoming information gatekeepers themselves if their knowledge becomes respected enough within the community (Lee et al 2013; Nyman 2010; Adams 2009):

> Among fans, the quantity of acquired information forms the foundation of a hierarchy in the fan community. Fans who can obtain abundant information quickly, and fans who cannot, establish an invisible hierarchical link (Lee et al 2013, p.749).

Through the discipline of genre theory it is clear how both rhetorical and literary genres have come to inform much of fandom's classificatory practices, and how each fandom has developed its own genres which are designed to be tailored to that particular community's own needs. However, this is not merely a case of fan communities creating genres, but genres

[41] One might also see the relationship here to Pierre Levy's (1999) 'cosmopedia'.

creating fan communities – and how this symbiosis is central to the development of a) fan identity and b) the fantext (Devitt 2004; HollyLime n.d.).

Further to this, it would seem that fans exemplify, or at least display, different aspects of online communities, and that consequently their behaviours are rich and diverse. Through the literature review, it has been determined that they fit into several categories of online community as described by scholars from various backgrounds: communities of transaction, interest, fantasy and relationships (Armstrong and Hagel 2000); communities of play (Pearce 2011); interpretive communities (Busse and Gray 2011; Aden 1999; Fish 1980); and genre and discourse communities (Devitt 2004; Swales 1990). These serve as a background to the remediative activities that fans engage in, and should also serve to warn the researcher that the motivations behind what fans do are myriad and various. Nevertheless, it cannot be understated that the element of *play* is central to much of what is evidenced by fan behaviour, as well as passion or, one might dare say, obsession.

The concept of *pleasure* as a driver for information behaviour is one that has been little explored, and whilst studies such as Hartel (2010) and Margree et al (2014) show us the information behaviour of similar, hobbyist groups, they fail to capture the large-scale, participatory aspects of online culture that fan communities so exemplify. There has been some research within LIS into intrinsically-motivated information behaviour, which may bear some insight into the type of information behaviour fans exhibit. Extrinsically-motivated users are "driven by the expectation of some reward or benefit external to the system-user interaction" (van der Heijden 2004, p.697), whereas when "people are intrinsically motivated, they act out of interest and enjoyment" (Crow 2009, p.93). Such behaviour is characterised by "the inherent tendency to seek out novelty and challenges, to extend and exercise ones' capacities, to explore, and to learn" (Ryan and Deci 2000, p.70), to centre on activities that promote "satisfaction and contentment as individuals strive toward accomplishment" (Dubnjakovic 2017, p.1035), and a drive to "experience stimulation" that is "tied to [the]

sensory and esthetic [sic] pleasures derived from the activity" (p.1039). While it would be disingenuous to suggest that fan information behaviour is solely intrinsically-motivated (as opposed to extrinsically-motivated), these characteristics are indeed very similar to that which have been deduced from the literature analysis findings.

It should be noted that the concept of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation has not had much impact on the study of human information behaviour within LIS. For example, seminal works on information behaviour, such as Case and Given (2016) and Ford (2015), make no mention of it. Nevertheless, there has been some little research on intrinsically-motivated information behaviour within LIS. These include Dubnjakovic 2017, Rode 2016, Crow 2015, Yan and Davison 2013, Crow 2009, David et al 2006, and Kuhlthau 1993. What is noticeable from these studies is that they focus on intrinsic motivation within organisational or work contexts; or on how to engender such motivation within these contexts. As far as can be ascertained, there have been no studies into intrinsically-motivated information behaviour within (serious) leisure contexts, where one can assume intrinsic motivation takes centre stage. Therefore, this thesis should potentially give some initial, exploratory insight into intrinsically-motivated information behaviour within a serious leisure context – specifically within the context of cult media fandom. This may find some applicability to other serious leisure groups, such as hobbyists, enthusiasts and amateur groups.

With this in mind, one can deduce that fan communities have a lot to tell information science about *why* massive groups of people choose to create and curate huge corpuses of work for free, and, indeed, whether the passion or *pleasure* of these groups of people can be harnessed in ways that are useful to the information profession.

What is not clear from the literature review is if there is any *real* difference between the information behaviour of fans when they are *offline*. There is no doubt that the information practices of fans have been revolutionised by the advent of the internet, but it is far from certain what the relationship is between what they do online and what they do

offline. Has online participatory culture changed what they do offline, or has it remained the same the past twenty years or so? Is the internet just another tool in the fan arsenal, or is it an integral part of fan life that can no longer be done without?

What is also not clear is how these new forms of fan produsage and remediation are challenging the very industries that are at the source of so many fan franchises – the media industry and the publishing houses that give the fans the books, comics, TV shows, games and movies that their communities thrive on. Web 2.0 has brought with it a burgeoning DIY culture, where it is easy to promote, share, disseminate and even sell fanworks. What does this have to say about intellectual property and copyright in the modern information society, and is a new paradigm needed to satisfy the creative needs of fans and other amateur producers/produsers? Answering this question will help to satisfy objective 3 of this thesis.

Lastly – and perhaps most crucially – is a model of fan information behaviour needed? The answer would appear to be 'yes' – a model is needed to help visualise and understand the cyclical, remediative aspects of information behaviour displayed by fans, if, indeed, those aspects are not sufficiently represented by current models which encompass other 'serious leisure' behaviours.

To summarise, with the three objectives of this thesis in mind, the following table highlights the five specific questions to be investigated in the empirical section of this thesis.

AREAS OF SPECIFIC INVESTIGATION

1. How much of fan information behaviour is determined by the *online* and has been enabled by the internet?
2. How much of fan information behaviour is determined by the *offline* and is intrinsic to being a fan in itself?
3. What are the information resources fans use, develop and share? Are official and fan-made resources of equal importance to fans?
4. What can we learn from fan participatory culture and the ways in which fans support and mentor one another?
5. What can we learn about the semi-professional activities of fans and whether these warrant new attitudes towards publishing, copyright and intellectual property?

For clarity, the following table summarises the current findings with the thesis objectives and the areas for specific study in the empirical section of the thesis.

Objectives of thesis	Impact areas	Literature review findings	Areas for specific investigation	Delphi questions
1. To better understand the information behaviour of a unique group of people and therefore better plan information services and/or architectures.	**1.** Library and information professions	• Fans tend to favour informal information sources over official ones. • Fans are motivated by a sense of belonging, for uniqueness, approval, to adhere to community norms, and sensation-seeking (Lee et al. 2013). • Online fan groups can be classed as communities of transaction, interest, relationships, fantasy, play and interpretation. • Genre is an important aspect of community-building. • There is no single model of information behaviour that encapsulates the complexities of fan information behaviour, but many touch upon aspects of that behaviour.	• How much of fan information behaviour is determined by the *online* and has been enabled by the internet? • How much of fan information behaviour is determined by the *offline* and is intrinsic to being a fan in itself?	**1.** Online activity **2.** Offline activity **3.** Information resources
2. To investigate fanwork collections, their place as cultural products, and how fans create, disseminate, promote, organise, access and preserve them.	**1.** Library and information professions **2.** Copyright **3.** Publishing	• Fans develop their own sophisticated bibliographical standards and classification systems. • Genre is an important aspect of fanwork classification. • Fanworks may be considered archontic texts, i.e. part of a wider source text that is a constant work-in-progress. • Fans are interested in the preservation of their own works and are making concerted efforts to do so (Versaphile 2011).	• What are the information resources fans use, develop and share? Are official and fan-made resources of equal importance to fans?	**1.** Information resources **2.** Participatory culture
3. To explore whether fan information behaviour can be generalised to, and whether it can inform other domains, including LIS, the publishing and media industries, education, and copyright law.	**1.** Copyright **2.** Publishing **3.** Media industry **4.** Education	• Fans develop their own editing and reviewing practices. • Fans engage in mentorship and other forms of peer-learning. • Many media industries encourage participatory fan activities, but it is unclear whether this is a form of exploitation. • Despite suggestions of more fan agency, many producers are protective of their intellectual property.	• What can we learn about the semi-professional activities of fans and whether these warrant new attitudes towards publishing, copyright and intellectual property? • What can we learn from fan participatory culture and the ways in which fans support and mentor one another?	**1.** Participatory culture **2.** Pro-ams (professional amateurs)

Table 11: Summary of literature review findings, linked to thesis objectives, impact areas and Delphi study questions.

3. PART THREE – Methodology

This chapter presents an overview and rationale for the research methods and design used throughout the entirety of this study. First the research approach is discussed, focusing particularly on the implications of conducting cross-disciplinary empirical work. This describes the philosophical background used, and justifications for the methods used. Second, the research process undertaken for the entire project is briefly described. Third, the research methods for the empirical work are laid out. Fourth, the ethics involved in this multidisciplinary research is discussed, followed by a final summary.

3.1. Research approach

Establishing a working methodology is a critical aspect of any study, in that it guides the research process and informs how the research aims and objectives are to be met. In the research presented here, this was a particularly crucial question as it is a cross-disciplinary study, using both aspects of LIS and fan studies.

There are, simplistically speaking, two research paradigms – the positivist and interpretivist paradigms. These are not world views, but positions from which to study, investigate and observe the world. A simple way of explaining both is given by Thomas (2009): "For positivists, knowledge about the […] world can be obtained objectively: what we see and hear is straightforwardly perceived and recordable" (p.74), whereas for interpretivists the world is not "straightforwardly perceivable because it is **constructed** by each of us in a different way" (p.75; original emphasis). Each of these paradigms has come to be associated with a set of research methods – quantitative with positivism, qualitative with interpretivism. Simplistically speaking, quantitative methods collect and analyse numbers, facts and figures, using experimental and manipulative methods, whereas qualitative methods collect and analyse words and interactions, using subjective interpretative techniques. However, as Bawden and Robinson (2012) remind us, "[i]n practice there is an overlap. Few studies are

solely one or the other. Each has its own ways of analysing the data generated in the research process" (p.305). Therefore it is wise to consider that quantitative and qualitative methods are extreme ends of a spectrum, with most research sitting somewhere in-between.

Traditionally, LIS research methods have focused on quantitative or systems-based approaches (Case and Given 2016, p.43), focusing on the measuring and analysis of quantifiable data, and the use of deductive and fact-based processes (Gorman and Clayton 2005, p.16). Even in the current literature, quantitative methods predominate, although qualitative methods appear to be gaining in importance (Togia and Malliari 2017). Nevertheless, Togia and Malliari (2017) regard qualitative methods as not being "adequately utilized by library researchers and practitioners, despite their potential to offer far more illuminating ways to study library-related issues" (p.59). Interestingly, they found that the use of mixed methods in LIS research is still rare, and still has not found wide recognition within the discipline (p.59). It is also important to note that LIS is not merely a field of scientific inquiry, but also of professional practice (Togia and Mailliari 2017, p.43). As such, the relationship between research and practice has done much to develop the trajectory of LIS' scientific inquiry and the methodological tools it uses. Research in LIS can therefore be cross-disciplinary, for example in regards to information behaviour, which by its nature looks at a wide variety of user groups. Togia and Malliari (2017) note that much LIS research "is multidisciplinary in nature, and it has been heavily influenced by research designs developed in the social, behavioral, and management sciences and to a lesser extent by the theoretical inquiry adopted in the humanities" (p.44). This is especially relevant to this thesis, which intersects to a great extent with the field of fan studies (itself a daughter discipline of cultural and media studies). The following section therefore discusses methods and methodology within that field.

3.1.1. Methodology in fan studies

Cult media is a broad and ever-growing field with a great number of related subdivisions. Its categorical structure is largely rhizomatic, with each subsection splintering off into numerous branches. For example, cult media itself can be divided into several media types – television, film, literary, comic, videogame, etc. Each of these media types may be further divided into various genres, and indeed, there may be some crossover between types at this level (e.g. fantasy novels and fantasy films, etc.). Each genre may then be divided into further subgenres (e.g. crime thrillers, true crime, etc.). Such genres may be divided into yet more sub-sections – but eventually these filter down to franchises (such as *Star Wars, Star Trek,* the Agatha Christie novels, the *Grand Theft Auto* series of videogames, *X-Men*, etc.). Of course there are fans of wider genres and sub-genres, but a large number of fans tend to cluster around specific cult media franchises and individual titles. Furthermore, fans may be a fan of only a *particular* iteration of a franchise, series, or title to the exclusion of any other (Busse and Gray 2011).

This naturally leads to the conclusion that fans are an extremely diverse group of people, even in a fan community that has clustered around a single franchise. Fans of Sherlock Holmes should serve as an apt example: there are fans of the original Sir Arthur Conan Doyle novels; and then there are fans of the 1980's Granada television series starring Jeremy Brett, as well as fans of the more recent 2010's BBC iteration starring Benedict Cumberbatch. There may also be fans of one of the many Sherlock Holmes movies; or of the radio plays; or indeed, of the numerous non-canonical works that feature Holmes (and which some fans may actually be responsible for producing). Each fan group attached to one, some, or all of these sub-divisions may adopt differing norms, practices and nomenclatures – some may be in direct conflict with one another. Consequently, it is not easy to generalise the common features of fandom from such a broad and multi-faceted community (or cultures and sub-cultures) – particularly so when fans themselves might not see eye-to-eye with one another.

It has been noted that fans are generally quite self-reflexive, and that some fan groups display an exceptional self-awareness, even to the point of writing essays and guides for the benefit of the community as a whole (Derecho 2006; Karpovich 2006)[42]. But this does not necessarily extend to an understanding of fans of other cult media, or even of other fan groups that are also dedicated to the same franchise. To take a well-known example, *Star Trek* fans that have clustered around the homoerotic Kirk/Spock niche have sometimes been met with discomfort and suspicion by other *Star Trek* fans. Schisms within fandoms very often reach a 'crisis point' where niche communities splinter off and create their own norms, practices and vocabulary (Coppa 2006). In order to gain further insight into the information behaviour of cult media fans as a whole, it is therefore important to garner the opinions and insider knowledge of as diverse a range of individual communities as is appropriate to a graduate research project.

In stark contrast to the largely quantitative methods employed in LIS, research methods in fan studies is mainly qualitative. Fan studies has developed several methods for the study of fans and fandom. These are largely qualitative (Evans and Stasi 2014; Hills 2002). Well known methods include case studies, interviews, discourse or text analyses, psychoanalysis and ethnographies (autoethnographies being of particular note).

The relationship between fan studies and its 'mother' disciplines, media and cultural studies, has informed much of its methodological background, from which the above research methods are generally derived (Evans and Stasi 2014). Ethnography (of the cultural studies model) has been used in the earliest studies of fans and fandom, seminal works such as the aforementioned Jenkins ([1992] 2013) and Bacon-Smith (1992). Other notable works have used psychoanalysis (Penley 1992), historical research (Verba 2003), textual analysis (Aden 1999), and digital ethnography (Baym 1993) to name only a minute fraction as examples.

[42] An example of fan self-reflexiveness is *meta*, which Derecho (2006) describes as fan-generated literature that deals with the "historical, theoretical, and conceptual issues of fandom" (pp.61-62), and Karpovich (2006) as "the critical and often introspective discussions of aspects of fandom by the fans themselves" (p.175).

More recent studies have taken ethnography onto new social media platforms such as Twitter (Jones 2014b; Bore and Hickman 2013).

3.1.1.1. Methodological issues in fan studies

Hills (2012; 2002) has criticised a perceived lack of rigour in the methods of acafans (that is, academics who are themselves fans and research fandom)[43], the suggestion being that acafans are not sufficiently removed from the object of study, or are perhaps too particularly situated within a certain fandom/type of fan productivity, to demonstrate an objective stance. Hills uses the early ethnographies of Jenkins and Bacon-Smith as examples, and opines that in many cases:

> The assumption here is that sense and understanding are securely present inside the fan community, whereas external academic narratives […] are somehow fraudulent or imposed upon the phenomenon that they attempt to explain away...
>
> …[T]he positivism of such empirical work is *insufficiently positivist*: it typically ignores the structured gaps and replications within the discursive frameworks which are used by fans to account for and justify their fandoms (2002, p.68).

In recent years, Hills has become concerned with the binary ideas of aca-fandom as something to be valorised or as something to be dismissed (i.e. there is no difference or tension between academic and (aca)-fan identities). His position is that "scholar-fandom needs to be viewed not as one 'thing' to be celebrated or transcended, but precisely as a multiple series of bids for identity" (Hills 2012, p.17) and that "work in scholar-fandom has frequently been more acutely engaged either with the unsaids of the academy or with the unsaids of fandom, rather than with both, despite the fact that there is no necessary binary at

[43] It is also worth noting that the term 'acafan' (plural 'acafans' or 'acafen') has become considerably fluid and Hills also notes that it has undergone a change in definition over the years, now also encompassing the meaning of a scholar who identifies as a fan (and doesn't necessarily study fans themselves). Other terms such as fan scholar and scholar fan are also used, but all these terms appear to be fluid in meaning and are sometimes used interchangeably. For the purposes of clarity, the term 'acafan' is used throughout this thesis, although it should be borne in mind that there is no consensus on the definition of the term amongst acafans themselves.

work here – there is no reason why each could not be tackled together and relationally" (p.26). This stance, as far as possible, is the stance that has been assumed throughout this thesis.

Evans and Stasi (2014) contend that fan studies has done little to engage with issues of methodology. They highlight the multidisciplinary aspects of fan studies, particularly those aspects derived from media and cultural studies. These fields have often been criticised for not doing ethnography 'properly', i.e. not with the rigour and immersion established by older disciplines such as anthropology and sociology. As they note: "This deviation from traditional ethnographic practices means that the term 'ethnography' may provide the *illusion* of rigorous science to study popular culture" (p.10; my italics); and Hills (2002) also adds: "The term 'ethnography' is used often rather loosely in media and cultural studies, sometimes indicating little more than hour-long interviews with respondents" (p.68). Not only this, but Evans and Stasi also criticise two other popular methods used in fan studies – text analysis and psychoanalysis – on the basis that these do not give a true voice to fans, the former giving voice only to the fan text, and the latter relegating the fan to a "spectator position, not a lived experience". Indeed, Duffett (2013) and Harris and Alexander (1998) have warned against the danger of speaking *for* fans rather than allowing them to speak for themselves, thus skewing perceptions of fans according to the researcher's own subjective interpretations – and this, in their view, is one of the main pitfalls of researching fans and fandom.

Evans and Stasi advocate the use of autoethnography and digital ethnographies in order to a) harness the self-reflexiveness of the aca-fan, essential to mitigating the crisis of representation so inherent in fan studies and; b) to give context to the individual reflections of fans through a broader, globalised and politicised structure i.e. the internet. It is not the remit of this thesis to evaluate these recommendations – autoethnography, for example, has already been criticised for its inherent subjectivity, lack of reference to a wider discourse, and the need for constant self-justification of the researcher (Duffett 2013; Hills 2002). Nevertheless, Evans and Stasi do also advocate a wider dialogue on methodology in fan studies that has heretofore

been overlooked, as does Booth (2015b), who warns that "[t]o learn about the media industry, we must develop a methodology for understanding fandom; to understand fandom, we must concentrate on the ways the media industry understands fans" (p.23).

Fan studies had always been much concerned with the psycho-social and cultural aspects of fandom, such as fan practice, fan community and fan labour (see, for example, Jenkins [1992] 2013, Busse and Hellekson 2006, and Bacon-Smith 1992). It has, however, been less concerned with process, and quantitative methods of measuring behaviour, and this is where it differs substantially from the approaches used in LIS.

Like fan studies, LIS has become increasingly concerned with the psycho-social behaviour of information users (Case and Given 2016, p.43), although in its early years the field was primarily dominated by quantitative approaches (Togia and Malliari 2017; Case and Given 2016). More recent years have seen a growing interest in qualitative methods, or, indeed, in mixed methods; and in even more recent years, there has been a small but growing use of alternative methods (Togia and Malliari 2017; Malliari and Togia 2016; Greifeneder 2014). Even auto-hermeneutic methods, of which autoethnography is a part – and which LIS itself is only now beginning to acknowledge for its opportunities to "contribute to theory building", "address important questions" and "study information experiences in contexts that have not yet been explored from the perspective of information science" (Gorichanaz 2017, n.p.) – have been proposed as a viable method for LIS research. Whilst LIS and fan studies share many methods in the way they seek to investigate fan and user behaviour, they differ in their approach to analysing and synthesising the fruits of their investigation. Fan studies is very much concerned with individual experience from an anthropological perspective, whereas LIS is more concerned with the generalisations that can be inferred from studying the processes of individual or group behaviour. Such processes can be seen in the many models of information behaviour that have been developed over many years of LIS research, some of which are discussed in section 2.3.1. A review of these models and more can be viewed in

Bawden and Robinson (2012, pp.192-199) and Case and Given (2016, ch. 7). For recent studies on collaborative information behaviour, see González-Ibáñez, Haseki and Shah (2013), Shah (2013) and Arif, Du and Lee (2015).

The challenge throughout this phase of the study was to marry the two perspectives by using a method that would use aspects of both disciplines. In essence, the goal was to conduct a study that would incorporate elements of a) the emphasis on rich, qualitative textual accounts favoured by the ethnological approaches used in fan studies and; b) the emphasis on process and the mapping of human behaviours which LIS advocates. Current trends in both fields may facilitate a potential merging of methods, as LIS is beginning to move away from generalised concepts of information behaviour to contextual ones (Greifeneder 2014), and fan studies is calling for more awareness and rigorous application of methodological practices (Evans and Stasi 2014).

3.1.2. Mixed methods

Taking into account the broad research aim of this thesis (i.e. studying the information behaviour of cult media fans), and the cross-disciplinary nature of the research (merging LIS and fan studies), mixed methods research (MMR) was felt to be the most applicable to the study, implying a mix of both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

MMR has an established history of at least 30 years or so, and has also been widely used by LIS practitioners (Case and Given 2016, pp.266-268; Fidel 2008). The advantages of MMR are that they enable the researcher to tackle and interrogate data from both positivist and interpretivist angles, and that they enable the researcher to tailor methods to a particular research question (Wildemuth 1993).

However, Wildemuth (1993) is also quick to note that the researcher should have a proper grasp of the “advantages and limitations of each approach”, and Pickard (2013) also cautions against an assumption that a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods can

compensate for the limitations of each. As with other methods, rigour is of the utmost importance, and should be applied just as meticulously to MMR as with other forms of research.

As just mentioned, MMR has been used in LIS for several years now, although until fairly recently a proper awareness of its use in this field has not been entirely acknowledged – Fidel (2008) tells us that it has "not yet established itself as a concept in LIS research" (p.271). Fidel encourages a better understanding of MMR in LIS as it may increase a study's "power, acceptance, and validity. Researchers who are familiar with MMR and its benefits are more likely to provide additional support for their explanations than those who are not aware of it" (p.272).

With regards to this study, Wildemuth (1993), in her conclusion of two studies which used an MMR-based approach, very effectively illustrated why MMR is particularly useful in terms of user studies:

> In the first example, interpretive techniques were helpful in beginning to develop an empirically grounded theory of the adoption of user-developed computing applications. However, a positivist approach is helpful in determining whether the theory is generalizable to situations other than those in which it was developed. In the second example, a positivist approach provided data about the frequencies of particular searching behaviors and the patterns among those behaviors. However, an interpretive approach was helpful in understanding how the searchers themselves understood those searching behaviors and why they behaved in the way they did (p.466).

In subsequent years, Wildemuth (2016) has reiterated her stance on MMR as a viable research method within LIS, stating that it is useful for two reasons:

> First, phenomena of interest to researchers in our field include a wide array of information behaviors, and mixed methods research is likely to provide new perspectives on these behaviors. Second, our field already welcomes both quantitative and qualitative methods, so the integration of the two is a viable next step (p.121).

The first point, which specifically mentions information behaviour (the exploration of which, of course, constitutes the main aim of this study), is also supported by Ma (2012), who

has also advocated MMR for information behaviour research, the rationale being that since information behaviour is based in both the objective and subjective ontological worlds, mixed methods are therefore required to gain a full understanding of it.

It is for these reasons that MMR can be deemed appropriate to this particular research, and especially appropriate when applied to a study of an exceptionally diverse type of user (i.e. fans). To sum up, mixed methods research is appropriate for the following reasons:

- Qualitative methods can help to generate ideas that can develop or ground theory that can also be tested from a positivist perspective.
- Quantitative data can provide insight into what type of information behaviour fans engage in, and how they go about engaging in those behaviours.
- Quantitative methods will help determine whether data gathered from this study will be generalizable to users other than fans.
- Qualitative data can provide insight into what motivates fans to engage in these behaviours, and what their own views are on them.

3.1.3. Postpositivism vs. pragmatism

In discussing MMR, it is important to touch upon philosophical paradigms. Of course the nature of MMR assumes a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, which by extension assumes a mix of philosophical paradigms (i.e. positivist and interpretivist). The issue, however, is not so straightforward.

To a large extent, the consensus seems to be that pragmatism is the paradigm most associated with MMR (although this is by no means universally accepted), Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) having formally linked the paradigm to mixed methods research. Pragmatism, as Cresswell and Plano Clark (2011) put it, "draws on many ideas, including employing 'what works', using diverse approaches, and valuing both objective and subjective knowledge" (p.43). Pragmatism "arises out of actions, situations, and consequences, rather than

antecedent conditions (as in postpositivism). There is a concern with applications […] and solutions to problems. Instead of focusing on methods, researchers emphasise the research problem and use all approaches available to understand the problem" (Cresswell 2014, p.10). Cresswell and Plano Clark (2011, p.43) outline the basic tenets of pragmatism as related to MMR:

- Both quantitative and qualitative methods can be used in a single study.
- The research question is more important than the philosophical worldview or methods used.
- The forced choice between postpositivism and constructionism (i.e. interpretivism) should be abandoned.
- Metaphysical constructs such as 'truth' and 'reality' should be abandoned.
- A practical and applied research philosophy should guide methodological choices.

Certainly, pragmatism is useful here in that it advocates both the use of quantitative and qualitative methods, and the broad scope of the research aim (to ascertain the information behaviour of fans) would mean that the research question in this case does indeed constitute the central guiding principle of this study. Likewise, due to its cross-disciplinarity with fan studies, purely positivist constructs such as 'truth' and 'reality' are not useful here. Lastly, while this study is not concerned with professional practice, or action research *per se*, there is certainly a practical element in that the findings may inform the development of information provision or architectures for fans, and indeed, it does intend to explore fan practices heavily.

From an LIS standpoint, Pickard (2013) has made it clear that she believes that "mixed methods fall within a postpositivist paradigm" (p.18). Postpositivism can be described as less deterministic and mechanistic than positivist approaches, but is still based in the quantification and generalisation of empirically-derived data; these data can be subject to interpretivist analysis. The strength of this paradigm is that it allows for methodological pluralism. This is

especially appropriate in an area of research that is an amalgamation of two widely disparate fields, i.e. LIS which is more heavily based in the observation of process; and fan studies, which by contrast is more heavily based in the interpretivist paradigms of cultural and media studies. The behaviour of fans is dynamic and diverse, and current models of information behaviour do not *fully* account for the complexity of that behaviour (see section 2.3.2). As has also been discussed, fandoms also take place across a very broad sweep of entertainment forms, and the actions and motives of many fans can be wildly divergent (see section 2.1.1). It is important therefore – as it is in any study of user behaviour – to engage information users (in this case cult media fans) with their own sentiments on why they do what they do with regards to their information behaviour, and to make room for interpretation of those sentiments. It is important to employ both positivist and interpretivist approaches – to observe *what* and *how* these fans do what they do, but also *why* they do it.

Whilst both postpositivist and pragmatic paradigms have been used in MMR, some MMR scholars find that there is a tension between the two. Movements to link MMR to pragmatism are strong (Cresswell and Plano Clark 2011), whilst postpositivism is rarely seen as compatible with it, Hall (2012) going so far as to say that there are "so few differences between positivism and postpositivism that treating them as distinct world views is hardly warranted. Indeed postpositivism modifies some of the excesses of positivism such as the claim that research must be value free, so that it can be regarded as the successor of positivism" (p.72).

This tension is reflected in the cross-disciplinary nature of the research undertaken for this thesis. It might be considered postpositivist inasmuch as quantitative data is collected throughout the empirical work, with interpretative analyses of the data; and qualitative data is also collected, with quantitative analysis undertaken in the form of descriptive statistics, in the Delphi study. Pragmatism accounts for the concept of fan information behaviour as *practice*, a focus on a central research question with a very wide remit, and the subjective, qualitative

methodologies typically employed within fan studies. Therefore, a blended worldview has been employed throughout this research, taking an umbrella viewpoint of pragmatism, whilst conducting data collection and analysis using both postpositivist and interpretivist worldviews.

This is not unprecedented in MMR. Cresswell and Plano Clark note that "multiple worldviews can inform a mixed methods study and that the choice of worldview is related to the type of mixed methods design chosen" (2011, p.51). Christ (2013) adds that "the researchers' philosophical stance, termed a worldview, should neither be so rigid as to restrict views to a singular paradigm, nor limit the choice of how methods are conducted" (p.113). In the real world, the borders between paradigms are fuzzy, and "the philosophical views of most researchers do not clearly belong to any single philosophical tradition, as the paradigmatic model assumes" (Niglas 2017, p.6). Niglas (2017) promotes the idea of three strands – philosophical paradigms, methodologies and disciplines (arts-sciences) – as existing on separate continua (see Figure 15). These three continua interact in a multi-dimensional space, and these provide a richer, more complex overview of methodological research that cannot be fully elucidated by simplistic paradigmatic views. Niglas (2017) explains that:

> the best understanding of the different possibilities for generating a design for an empirical research study can be achieved through an open and creative, yet at the same time a systematic and organized, perspective on the relationships between different philosophical orientations, methodological approaches, and aspects of design (p.21).

Whilst Niglas' multidimensional model of research methodology (see Figure 15) is not strictly used here, it is a useful way to conceptualise the type of research that inevitably deals with issues of paradigmatic tension. The idea that LIS represents the purely postpostivist elements of this study, and fan studies the purely interpretivist, is to be rejected. Neither are strictly at either end of the spectrum, despite the wide disparity between their worldviews and methodological stances. My contention here is that that wide disparity demands a less rigorous conformity to any one paradigm within this research. Both mixed methods and a blended paradigmatic view should mitigate the tension between the two.

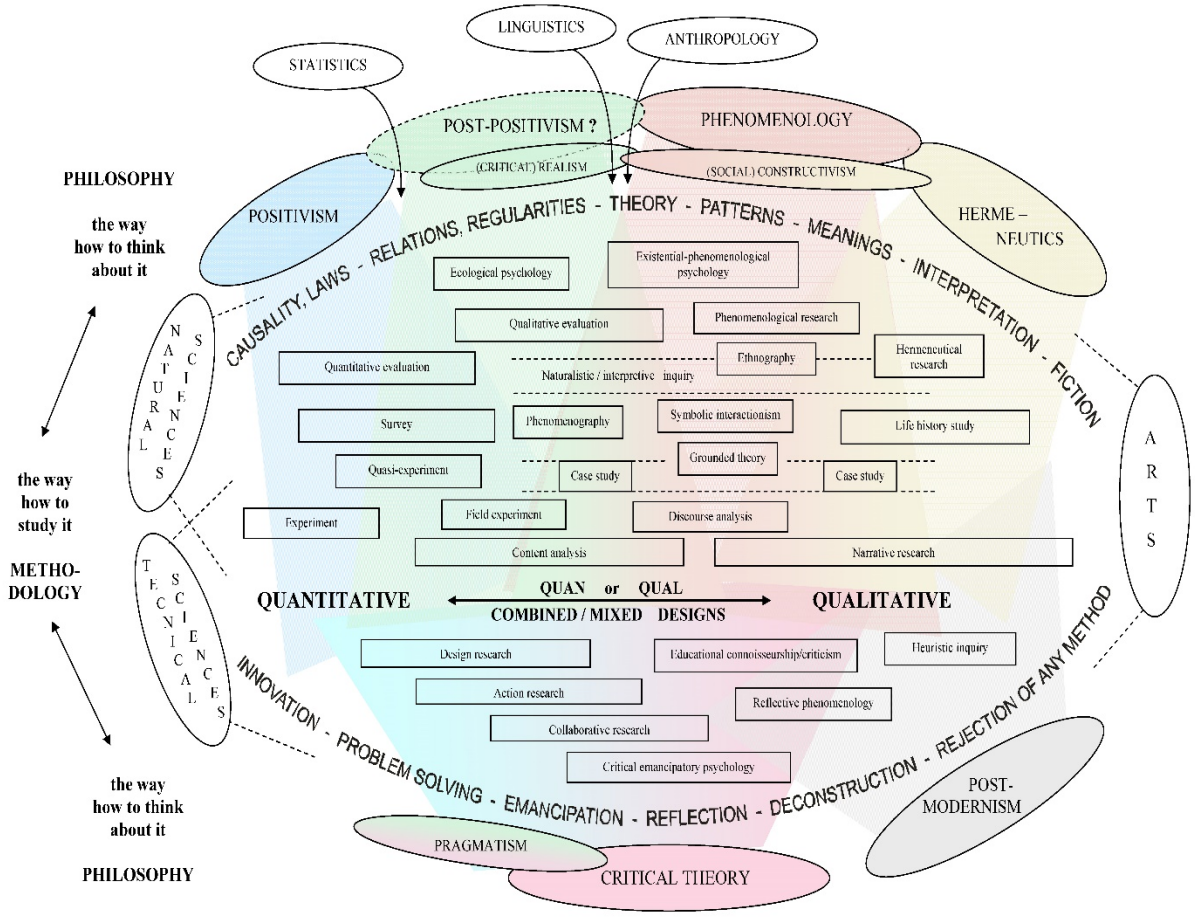


Figure 15: Niglas' multidimensional model of research methodology (Source: https://www.tlu.ee/opmat/ka/opiobjekt/Kasvatusfilosoofilised_paradigmad/katrin_niglas_uurimismetodoloogiast_ja_paradigmadest.html), revised version from original by Niglas (2001)

3.1.4. Cultural neo-dualism

At this juncture, and keeping in mind the idea of tension between philosophical paradigms, it is worth noting the concept of 'cultural neo-dualism', a term coined by Luciano Floridi during a Turing Lecture given in 2016, and referring to C. P. Snow's original cultural dualism, that between the sciences and the humanities. This is described by Bawden (2016) as "a new divide among the academics and practitioners who focus on information and data" (n.p.). To use Floridi's own words:

> Unfortunately we are also witnessing, in this new hyper-historical time, a new cultural neo-dualism. […] We do the data, we don't care about the information. We care about patterns; no, we care about meanings. We care about syntax; no, we care about semantics. Quantitative, qualitative – now that divide, which would be terrible if it were to become

> permanent, is the new sort of two cultures that we are witnessing today […] And that would not be a solution for the future (2016, 17:31).

In other words, there is a growing trend to separate both information science and data science, and the two approaches associated with each — "one which emphasises data, pattern, syntax, and quantitative methodology; one which favours information, meaning, semantics, and qualitative methods" (Bawden 2016, n.p.). This, in view of what has been discussed in the previous section, is a false dichotomy, and unhelpful in our conception of LIS, what its remit is, and the methods it uses to investigate phenomena. This is not an issue that, as yet, has been widely discussed in LIS, but one might posit that in the future it will become of increasing importance, as "data handling is becoming ever more important for LIS specialists" (Bawden and Robinson 2017, p.9), and data scientists must become reconciled to the fact that, far from being objective and neutral, "data is theory dependent and may be full of biases" (Wang 2017, n.p.).

This false dichotomy between the tenets of LIS and data science sees echoes of the paradigmatic tensions between (post)positivist and interpretivist paradigms, between the sciences and the humanities discussed in the previous section, and, as with the rejection of LIS-fan studies being at irreconcilable ends of a paradigmatic spectrum, here it is the same with LIS-data science. Throughout this study the intention is to give equal consideration to both the qualitative and quantitative; to data and to information; to patterns and to meanings; to the postpositivist and the interpretivist; to LIS and to fan studies. The aim, of course, is that this holistic approach better equips the researcher to answer the main reasearch question: What is the information behaviour of fans?

3.1.5. Triangulation

It is perhaps obligatory when talking about mixed methods research to mention triangulation, as this is the most widely known application of MMR within LIS (Fidel 2008). As Thomas (2009) explains, "the term is used to indicate that viewing from several points is better

than viewing from one" (p.111). It is worth bearing in mind, however, that there are several types of triangulation, outlined in both Fidel (2008) and Thomas (2009), of which *methodological* or *methods triangulation* refers to what is understood by MMR. This form of triangulation implies the use of multiple data collection methods in order to approach a research question from different angles. It does not, however, require the use of methods from different paradigms (e.g. positivist and interpretive), although when it does so, it naturally implies mixed methods research (Fidel 2008).

For the purposes of this thesis, mixed methods triangulation has been used to investigate the information behaviour of fans. This has been deemed appropriate in that fans and fandom have, till now, largely been understood from a cultural and fandom studies perspective with a wide corpus of interpretivist literature, but the understanding of fans from an LIS perspective is meagre in the extreme (see section 2.2.3.2), and the approaches of LIS generally have very little in common with that of fan studies. Thus it is important to *corroborate* evidence of fans and their information behaviour from multiple perspectives, and mixed methods triangulation is an eminently appropriate way of achieving this.

3.1.6. Mixed methods research design

A research design is important within mixed methods research, as it guides and structures the empirical work to be undertaken, allowing the researcher to express which paradigm is to be given overall emphasis, or alternatively, which paradigm is to be given emphasis at which point of the research; time ordering is also a helpful element of the research design (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004, p.19). Other important factors include where in the research method mixing should occur, whether MMR should be undertaken throughout the project (fully mixed methods) or only at certain stages (partially mixed methods), or whether they are to be undertaken concurrently or sequentially (Cresswell and Plano Clark 2011; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004). Figure 16 shows the different MMR research designs proposed by Cresswell and Plano Clark (2011).

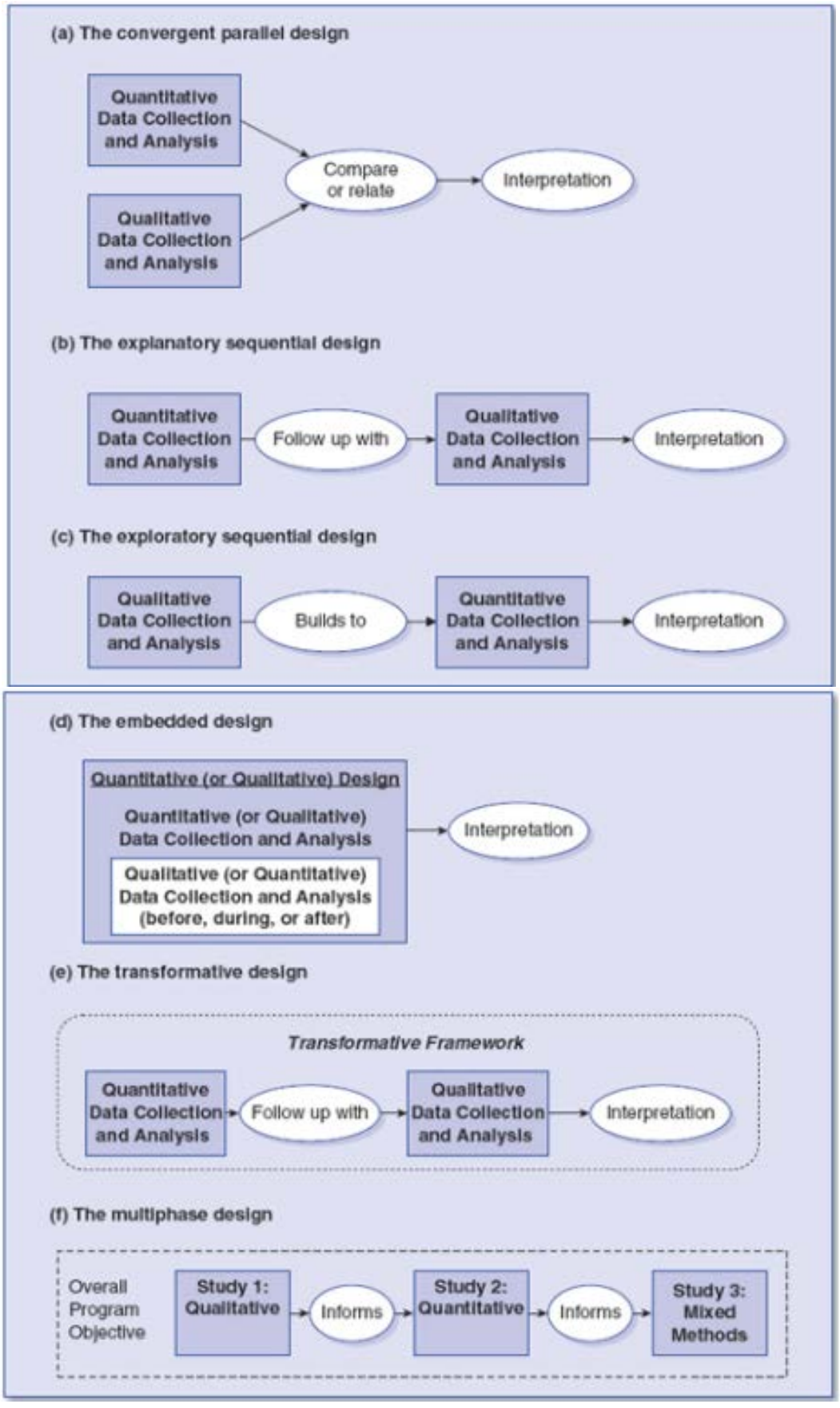


Figure 16: Cresswell and Plano Clark's (2011) mixed methods research designs (p.68-69).

The multiphase design was chosen for this study, for the following reasons:

- The study consists of one overarching research aim, which is comprised of related though separate objectives;
- A single mixed methods study is not sufficient to cover the scope of the broad research aim;
- A multi-year timescale is needed to complete the entire process;
- The research is emergent, with new questions being developed at the end of each stage of the study.

This does not cover all the points that Cresswell and Plano Clark (2011, p.100) suggest could be motives for choosing a multiphase design. For instance, I am not part of a team, nor experienced on large-scale projects. Nevertheless, Cresswell and Plano Clark do not discount individual researchers using the design, nor is involvement on large-scale projects pointed out as a prerequisite. The main reason why this design is most suitable is that the research aim is very broad, suggests the need for multiple angles of inquiry, and it is likely to develop more research questions and/or areas of focus. A sample workflow of a multiphase MMR project is reproduced in Figure 17.

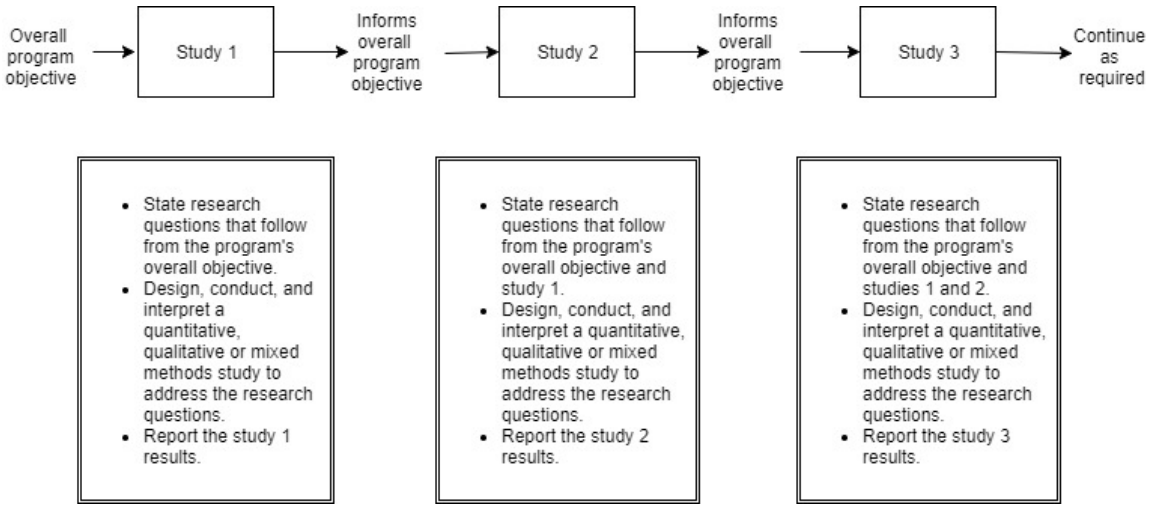


Figure 17: The multiphase research design (Cresswell and Plano Clark 2011, p.101)

The research process consists of an overarching research question, and at least three studies conducted in a sequential order. The findings from each study should inform the next. At the end of the process results are synthesized and conclusions are drawn. In this way the research process is iterative and emergent, with each stage building on what has preceded it to create an interlinked whole.

Cresswell and Plano Clark (2011, p.103) list six issues (or 'challenges') associated with the multiphase design. These challenges highlight that the multiphase design is not suitable for all research projects, and are as follows:

1) The researcher should be aware of the challenges of employing individual concurrent or sequential approaches;
2) There is a need for sufficient resources and funding over the length of the project;
3) The researcher should be aware of the challenges of working with, and potentially losing, team members;
4) The researcher should consider how to meaningfully connect the quantitative and qualitative strands of the study;
5) If the multiphase design is to be used as a part of program development, how best can research findings translate into the creation of program materials?;
6) The researcher may need to submit multiple applications to an institutional ethics board for each stage of the study.

Points 3 and 5 were not necessarily relevant, as the research was not being conducted as part of a team, nor specifically for program development (i.e. it was not action research). Point 1 was mitigated by careful planning of the research workflow (see Figures 18, p.142 and 22, p.179). Since this research was funded, and did not require materials or equipment that was prohibitively expensive, point 2 was not considered to be problematic. Point 4 required not only careful planning at the research design phase, but also constant reflection and re-evaluation at key points, such as before and after each stage of the study was conducted.

Lastly, point 6 was satisfied in that each individual study was presented to the City, University of London research ethics board for evaluation, and was subsequently approved.

3.2. Research process

Stage one of the research commenced with a literature review (see Part Two). The purpose of this was to gain an insight into what has been published in the area, and whether there were any concepts or themes related to the research question present in the literature. This required identifying and reading relevant literature from both the LIS and fan studies corpus. A subsequent analysis and synthesis of the literature was undertaken. This involved a qualitative content analysis of the literature, involving coding key concepts into themes. These themes formed the basis of the subsequent empirical work, and are as follows:

- Fan communities
    - Knowledge capital
    - Negative views
    - Offline community
    - Online community
    - Participatory culture
    - Social capital
- Fan information behaviour
    - Communication
    - Gatekeeping
    - Genre
    - Indexing and classification
    - Information seeking
    - Produsage and user-generated content
    - Resources
- Social effect

- Charity
- Copyright
- Education
- Libraries
- Media industry
- Professional amateurs (pro-ams)
- Publishing

Stage two comprised a three-stage Delphi study. This study, essentially quantitative in nature, involved collecting the written statements of 31 fans and aca-fans from across the world. Purposive sampling was chosen as the sampling method, since the overall logic and purpose of the study required a certain group (i.e. fans) to participate (Punch 2014). Therefore, a sample of random participants would not fulfil the requirements of the study. The sampling process is discussed in more detail in section 4.2. The purpose of this stage of the study was to gain a general overview of fan information behaviour from a fan perspective. The results of this stage would test and build upon those of the literature analysis.

Stage three comprised three comparative case studies, which built upon three of the main themes resulting from the Delphi. A mixed methods approach was used here, involving 1) a quantitative tag analysis research method, and 2) qualitative semi-structured interviews. The aim of the tag analysis was to look in-depth at patterns of fan classification on three different online platforms which were used by the Romy fan community, and to ascertain any emergent themes present therein. The aim of the interviews was to gain some in-depth insight into the trends seen in the Delphi results, and to supplement the tag analysis results. The results from both research strands were analysed separately, and then synthesised.

The final stage involved a synthesis of all the results, and a final conclusion.

The workflow of the research process is presented in Figure 18. This is shown using the multiphase research design as discussed in section 3.1.6.

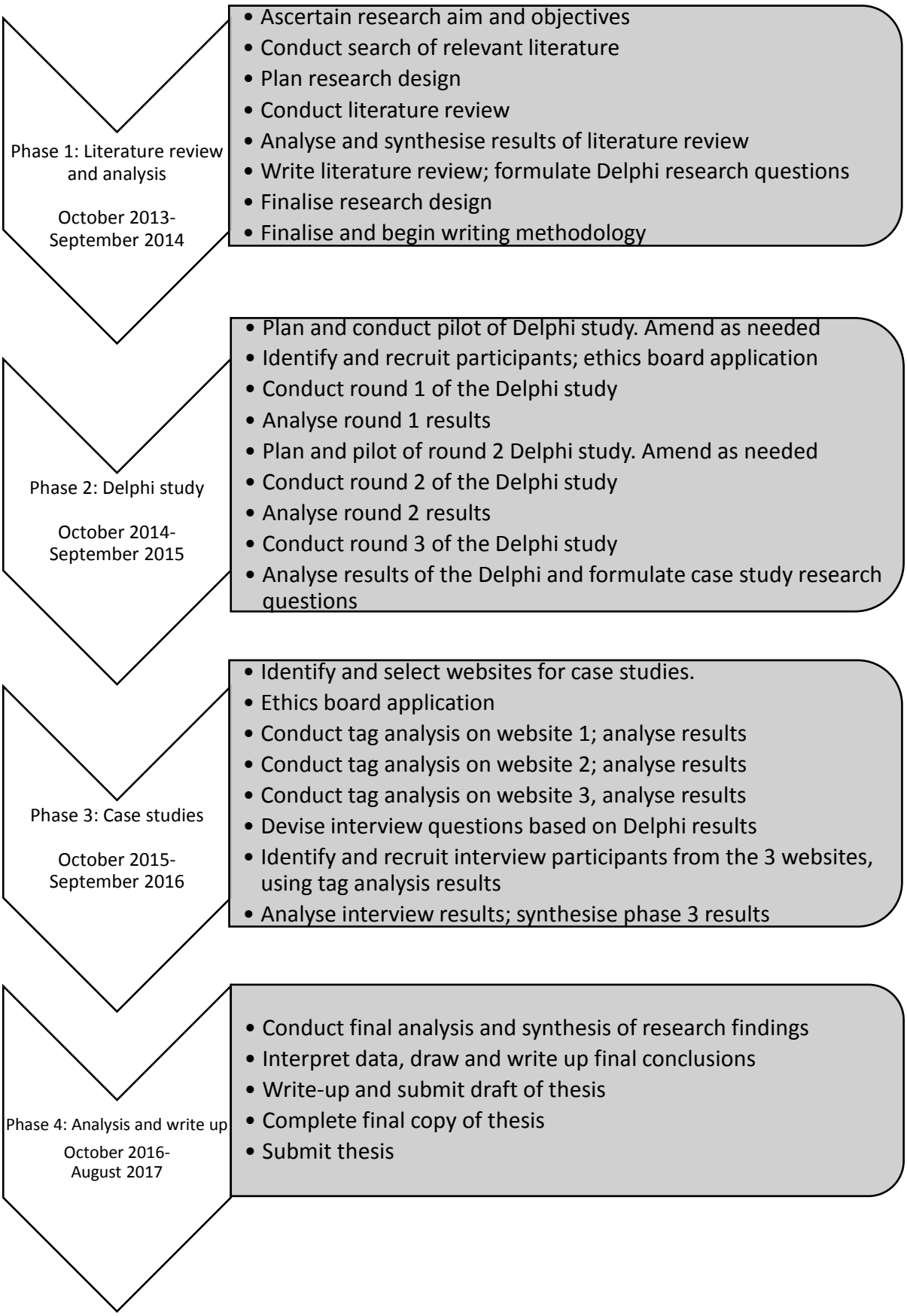


Figure 18: The final research timeline and workflow

3.3. Research methods

As detailed above, mixed methods have been employed in this study. Figure 19 shows how triangulation brings these three methods together. The three methods used are:

- Desk research, in the form of a literature review, analysis, and synthesis;
- A Delphi study;
- Case studies.

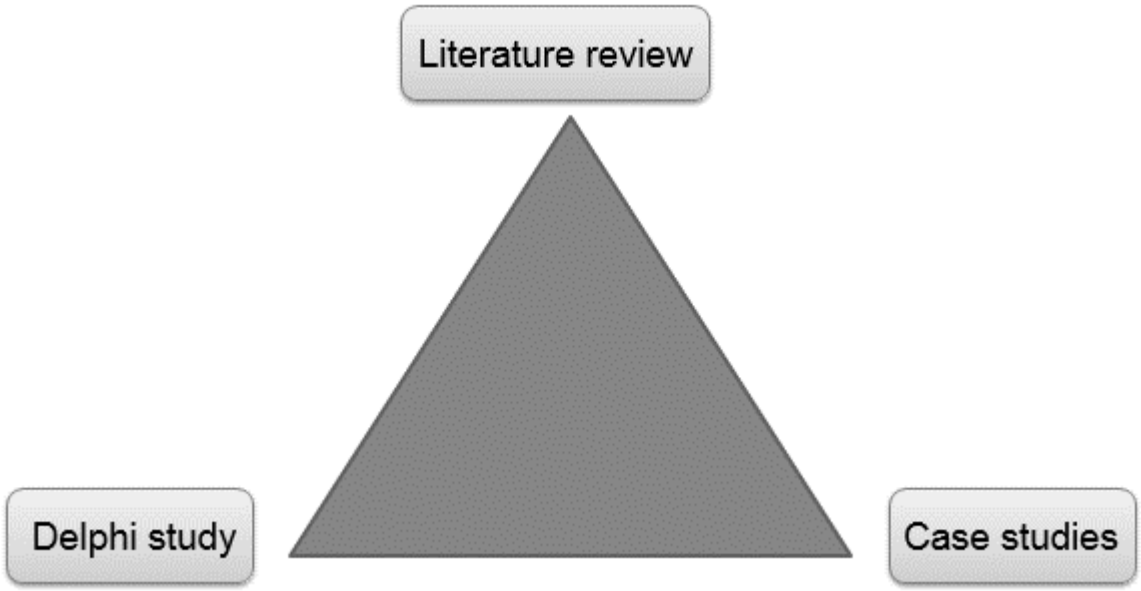


Figure 19: The triangulation method used in this thesis to study the information behaviour of fans.

The purpose of these methods is to discover, respectively a) what is already known about fans and their information behaviour; b) what fans *think* about their own information behaviour; and c) what can be *observed* about fans' information behaviour. These three contrasting bodies of evidence should – hopefully – come together to corroborate and complement one another, thus affording a clearer, broader picture of the current state of fan information behaviour.

The following section gives a summary of the use of each method in this thesis.

3.3.1. Literature review and analysis

A literature review is "a critical discussion of all significant, publicly available literature that contributes to the understanding of a subject" (Pickard 2013, p.26), and thus provides background, context and focus. But a literature review "represents much more than collecting and summarizing literature" (Onwuegbuzie, Leech and Collins 2012, p.2). It should also "methodologically analyse and synthesize quality literature" (Levy and Ellis 2009, p.182) in order to most effectively demonstrate not only the state of knowledge within the field so far, but how a piece of research is to be effectively built methodologically, and how it will advance current knowledge. A literature review and analysis is particularly vital here, as this study marries two fields of research that utilise very different methodological approaches and embody widely divergent conceptual paradigms. Fans as information users have but rarely been the subject of research within LIS, and the information practices of fans has not been on the agenda of fan studies as an area of enquiry. Methodologically, fan studies comes from an interpretivist background espoused by cultural and media studies which bears little in common with the more mixed methodological background of LIS. Since the two fields have had little to do with one another in past, it is important here to tease out any points of convergence or agreement between them by consulting both bodies of literature.

The purpose of the literature review was thus to develop a robust theoretical basis which informs the empirical section of the research. In this case, the literature review was presented in Part Two of this thesis, and foregrounds the empirical investigations which follow.

The literature review was conducted firstly through extensive background reading in fan studies, particularly in the seminal works discussed in section 2.2.2.2. This served to create a strong grounding in the otherwise unfamiliar discipline. Most of the print material was identified using the university's library catalogue, although much of the required material was not in the library's collection. This material was then ordered through the university Read for

Research programme[44], which allowed staff and research students to order books relevant to their field for the library collection. Much of the print resources were obtained in this manner.

Journal articles were chiefly accessed through online databases or e-journal sites (some open access; non-open access articles could in large part be accessed through the university library). Due to little work having been done in the domain of fan information behaviour, an initial search was done on sites such as JSTOR, LISA, LISTA, Mendeley, Academia.edu and Google Scholar for relevant literature using specific keywords, such as "fan information behaviour", "fan tagging", "fanfiction classification" etc. (or variations thereof). These focused searches yielded most of the background literature on fan information behaviour referenced here.

To keep up to date with current literature, frequent focused keyword searches were carried out. Alerts were created in Google Scholar and Zetoc to automate keyword searches and send relevant results to my inbox. Within both disciplines of fan studies and LIS, much material was found through citations found in relevant journal articles, which proved invaluable. Citation searches were also conducted to this end.

Individuals, peers and other academics were also a rich source of information. Strong relationships were also forged with members of the acafan community, who were kind enough to point me in the direction of relevant literature within fan studies, and from whom I was able to glean citations and references via their Twitter accounts and the #fanstudies Twitter feed. Colleagues within my own department were especially helpful in referring me to relevant sources.

Journal articles were organised into themed sub-folders in the Mendeley reference manager software. This enabled the effective management of references and citations, and its searchability afforded the easy location of relevant quotes. Mendeley also allowed the

[44] The full reading list can be viewed at https://blogs.city.ac.uk/ludiprice/read-for-research/.

tagging, highlighting and annotation of sources; although for annotation, printed sheets were preferred. Following best practice, printouts were kept of all web resources and stored in a locked filing cabinet.

In the initial stages of the literature review, articles and book excerpts were also imported into NVivo's qualitative data management software. These were inductively coded by theme (such as *Communication, Indexing and Classification, Publishing* etc. These codes later became the basis of the themes used in the Delphi study (see section 4.7.1 for details on the coding process). They also, to some extent, informed the structure of the literature review and its various sections.

The literature review itself was treated as an organic entity and was continually written, edited and updated from October 2013 onwards. It was therefore doubly important to keep up-to-date with current literature in the relevant disciplines, and this was reflected in constant updating of the written work which is presented in Part Two.

Upon completion of the review, a literature analysis was conducted. This involved isolating, separating, comparing and explaining sections of the literature that were most relevant to the area of study, i.e. fan information behaviour, and which demonstrated some overlap between the fields of LIS and fan studies. Once this had been done, these points of contact between the two disciplines were drawn together, thus synthesising the main points of the literature that clearly illustrated examples, or characteristics, of fan information behaviour. The final result of this literature analysis and synthesis was two provisional models of fan information behaviour (see Figures 13 and 14, pp.112-113). These attempted to depict the cyclical, remediative aspects of fan information behaviour, as discovered in the literature. These models were not intended to be final, and would go on to be tested in the empirical stages of the research.

The results of the literature analysis and synthesis are shown in section 2.4.

3.3.2. Delphi study

As outlined on p.128, trends in LIS are moving towards mixed methods of research (Greifeneder 2014), and fan studies is seeking a more rigorous approach to methodology (Evans and Stasi 2014). For these reasons, it was decided that the Delphi method would be the most appropriate for the purposes of this study, as it would amalgamate a rich, textual recording of individual experience with the overarching aim of gaining a generalised consensus amongst those individuals.

The Delphi as a method aims to facilitate the negotiation of consensus between a group of experts, via questionnaires and moderator-controlled opinion feedback (Luo and Wildemuth 2016; Pickard 2013). The most succinct definition is given by Linstone and Turoff (1975):

> Delphi may be characterized as a method for structuring a group communication process so that the process is effective in allowing a group of individuals, as a whole, to deal with a complex problem.
>
> To accomplish this "structured communication" there is provided: some feedback of individual contributions of information and knowledge; some assessment of the group judgment or view; some opportunity for individuals to revise views; and some degree of anonymity for the individual responses (p.3).

To give a more detailed overview: expert participants are given a problem, statement or question and are invited to present their (anonymous) opinion to the researcher in written form. The researcher then moderates, restructures and queries these responses and returns them to the pool of subjects for further comment in a series of rounds. These rounds continue until it is deemed that a consensus has been reached (Pickard recommends three to seven rounds). After each round, data is collected and processed, and once a consensus is reached, the final write-up may commence.

Pickard lists the following 6 ‘rules’ for conducting a Delphi study (2013, pp.152-153):

1. Only experts are used in the panel;

2. All data is collected in writing;
3. There is a systematic attempt to produce a consensus (consensus being the most common outcome, although occasionally divergence is the only result);
4. Panel members are given anonymity;
5. At least two rounds are used.

There are, however, modified versions of the Delphi method, and Pickard reminds the researcher that if there is any deviation from the core 'rules' outlined above, it should be considered a modified Delphi study. In this case, a modified Delphi was used, since the expert panel was not wholly comprised of experts in the traditional sense, necessitating the creation of a new Delphi variant, the 'Serious Leisure Delphi'. This is elaborated further in section 3.3.2.2.

3.3.2.1. The Delphi method – a history

The Delphi method is not a widely-used method of data collection within LIS, but it has a long history of use in many disciplines. It was first used by Helmer and Rescher in the late 1950's by the RAND Corporation, with the intention of developing a research method that would aid in the prediction of future events using the knowledge and experience of experts (Luo and Wildemuth 2016; Pickard 2013; Poirier and Robinson 2013). Helmer and Rescher (1958), speaking from an essentially postpositivist viewpoint, recognised the inherent fallibility of 'exactness' within both the exact and inexact sciences (i.e. the hard sciences such as physics or aeronautics, and the soft sciences such as sociology and psychology, respectively), and note that:

> What matters is not whether or to what extent inexactitudes in procedures and predictive capability can eventually be removed […]; rather it is objectivity i.e., the intersubjectivity of findings independent of any one's intuitive judgement, which distinguishes science from intuitive guesswork, however brilliant (p.5).

Likewise, their contention is that even in the hard sciences theories one often cannot account for all observed phenomena *all* of the time, because many of its laws are not fully

articulated; and therefore, that *most* phenomena cannot be predicted with any certainty, but as simply being "more credible than any comparable alternative". Because the social and psychological sciences often *do not* have fully articulated laws, any observed phenomena in these fields cannot be *explained* to any precise degree, but can be *reasonably predicted* due to its probability being greater than that of any other comparable alternative. This reasonable prediction, they judged, was to be best developed by the informed expert and by the application of their effective judgement. In this way, the pooled knowledge of a panel of experts would mitigate the subjective tendencies of a *single* individual, thus lending greater credence to a predicted outcome, especially when bolstered through *consensus*.

It is this consensus between a group of experts that lends the Delphi technique its strength. Whilst in the last 50-60 years or so it has moved beyond establishing predictions of future events, this strength has enabled researchers to seek a consensus opinion on complex problems within many subjects and fields, from maritime fraud (Kapoor 1987), to classification in family therapy (Lee 2012), to information architecture in business networks (Bobeva 2005). In light of its considerable versatility, several Delphi variants have been devised in order to deliver richer, deeper qualitative data. These variants differ in the aspects that they choose to focus on, the benefit of this being that the method can be tailored to different communities as appropriate. Strasser (2016) gives a detailed critique and description of Delphi variants; Poirier and Robinson (2014, pp.89-90) give an excellent summary of the main variations, which are reproduced below:

- *Policy Delphi*: designed to develop a range of future predictions, drawing on differences of opinion rather than consensus.
- *Disaggregative Policy Delphi:* focuses on the reasons how and why and a predicted outcome will come about.
- *Imen-Delphi*: explores the personal opinions and reactions of panel members.

- *Argument Delphi*: explores the process of debate within the context of the Delphi itself, drawing on the role of the panel moderator or researcher.
- *Critical Delphi*: explores the panel's understanding of concepts and the members' relationship to those concepts (see Zins 2007a-d for a more in-depth explanation of this variant).
- *Slow Delphi*: allows panel members extended periods of time to respond to questions, and focuses on differences of opinion rather than consensus (see Poirier and Robinson 2014, for an in-depth explanation of this variant).

In looking at the literature, especially in terms of previous PhD theses, it can be demonstrated that many Delphi do not, in fact, rigorously follow the Delphi method as originally laid out, or that of other variants. However, as far as I had been able to ascertain, deviations from known Delphi methods – and the detailing of any subsequent modifications to the mode – are rarely acknowledged (see, for example, the differences between Bobeva 2005, and Lee 2012). This is unfortunate, since the documentation of known Delphi methods cannot be readily determined or evaluated by the researcher in any straightforward manner. It was important, therefore, that this study record any known deviations from standard Delphi variants.

The Delphi study has already been implemented successfully in several past LIS studies, which have sought to investigate the information behaviour of certain sub-groups of information users. Green (2013) outlines the use of the Delphi study in LIS, and highlights its advantages in understanding professional practice and generating ideas. As noted above, in her study of trends in information behaviour research Greifeneder (2014) noted the growing usage of the Delphi method in LIS-based studies. Recent examples of the use of the Delphi method in LIS include Bowen (2017), Casstevens (2016), Howard et al (2016), Zins and Santos (2016), Casselden, Pickard and McLeod (2014), Poirier and Robinson (2013), Missingham (2011), and Zins (2007a-d). Those papers that have specifically used the Delphi to look at the

future of the LIS professions include Baruchson-Arbib and Bronstein (2002), Keller (2001), Feret and Marcinek (1999), Trier (1992), and Koskiala and Huhtanen (1989). All these studies provide rich, useful qualitative data on a wide range of issues and topics related to the broad spectrum of LIS.

3.3.2.2. Methodological rationale

In the context of this thesis, the Delphi study was considered appropriate as the method best allows for a merging of those aspects found in both disciplines of LIS and fan studies, i.e. an emphasis on process and empirical evidence, and on the textual analysis of rich, qualitative data respectively.

Table 12 lists the reasons why a researcher might want to use the Delphi method, as summarised from Linstone and Turoff (1975, p.4). The notes in italics reflect the reasons why the Delphi method was chosen for this particular study. Other reasons that the method was chosen, and that relate particularly to fans, are as follows:

- It focuses on 'expert' participants, and fans – with their detailed knowledge of their chosen fandom – may be considered 'niche experts', even though they hold no formal qualifications or professional capacity in their field.
- As many fans are interested in *their own status as fans*, and as some fan communities already have a body of self-critical literature (Derecho 2006; Karpovich 2006), the detailed written narrative form utilised in the Delphi study is highly appropriate.
- Due to the great size of cult media fandom, it is difficult to generalise the information behaviour of fans. The Delphi study helps to mitigate this problem by allowing the researcher to interrogate individuals from a wide variety of fan communities who are experts in their own individual spheres.
- The ongoing process of data moderation allows the researcher to refine participant opinions to a consensus, thus highlighting behaviours which *can* be generalised to the community as a whole.

- Incidences of opinion divergence are accounted for by the Delphi model – this is important due to the divergent nature of many fan communities (Busse and Gray 2011).

Reasons for applying the Delphi technique (Linstone and Turoff 1975)	**Reasons for using the Delphi technique in this study**
Precise analysis may not be the best method to tackle the research question, and collective, subjective judgements are needed.	*The research question, what is fan behaviour, is broad and complex and does to easily lend itself to precise analysis.*
Potential participants have a wide range of expertise and experience, and come from diverse backgrounds that may have no history of adequate communication.	*Fans come from diverse background and are fans of diverse franchises. Some may be casual fans, some may be more dedicated fans. Some may be aca-fans.*
More individuals are needed than can effectively interact face-to-face.	*In order to get as general an overview as possible, and thus improve the validity of the study, a larger number of participants than would be possible in a focus group or set of interviews is needed.*
Time and cost (and in this case, distance) make face-to-face meetings unfeasible.	*Most fan interactions take place on the internet and on a global scale. Potential participants are geographically widely dispersed over many countries.*
The efficiency of face-to-face meetings can be increased by a group communication process.	*Face-to-face meetings are not feasible in this instance.*
Disagreements between individuals may be so severe or politically undesirable that the process of communication requires anonymity and/or to be refereed.	*'Fandom wars' and 'flame wars' are prevalent within fan culture, even within a single community. Therefore the Delphi minimises the possibility of conflict between participants.*
Heterogeneity between participants may be preserved by keeping them apart and anonymous, and therefore less likely to be subject to peer pressure.	*Fandom is extremely heterogeneous, and preserving this aspect is crucial to obtaining a valid overall consensus.*

Table 12: Reasons for conducting a Delphi study, adapted from Linstone and Turoff (1975, p.4).

There are, however, disadvantages to the use of the Delphi method in this context, which should be borne in mind. For example, the divergent nature of fan communities themselves may actively work *against* any ultimate consensus being found and lead to the breakdown of the study, which the researcher may have limited control over. Moreover, the

Delphi method is geared towards summarising general expert opinion, rather than exploring in-depth the fundamental concepts underpinning a domain, and how these relate to the behaviours and practices of the group (Poirier and Robinson 2013). Lastly, due to the complex and diverse range of projected participants, reaching a consensus (or any meaningful discussion of relevant topics) may require more rounds than the minimum two can afford.

In terms of which Delphi variant to apply to this study, none was deemed entirely appropriate. With a group of people as diverse as fans, divergent opinions are frankly to be expected as a given. This study, whilst welcoming differences of opinion and the generation of concepts and ideas, is focused towards a consensus, or any generalisation of fan information behaviour. This aim towards consensus is in keeping with the original Delphi method. There is one aspect of the original method that is not appropriate to this study, and that is that whilst fans can be deemed experts in their arena of interest, they cannot be called experts in the traditional sense of being academically or professionally qualified in any way[45]. This is the only manner in which this study's potential panel would deviate from a traditional Delphi, and thus the form of Delphi used in this study must be considered a variant or modified Delphi. This variant has been called a 'Serious Leisure Delphi'.

It must also be owned that there is a great challenge in preparing a Delphi study because of the fact that, in journal papers and articles, very few in-depth and meticulous details are given of what is an exceptionally complex and time-consuming process. Zins (2007a-d), who pioneered the use of the Critical Delphi method in LIS gives little in the way of such details, such as the key process of analysing textual data from Round 1 to generate statements for Round 2. In this study, this problem was mitigated by reading several theses in the areas of LIS, information management, business and healthcare (e.g. Lee 2012; Wright

[45] LIS is beginning to recognise the importance of 'non-professional' experts in crowdsourcing and participatory projects. "Heritage is more than material within an archive, digital or analogue; it is the lived experience of the people and their community" (Westberg Gabriel and Jensen 2016, p.91). Participatory culture gives the opportunity to lend contextual expertise to a collection from the people it relates to – non-professional expertise, to be sure, but an expertise nonetheless, one that might be called 'lived expertise'.

2012; Bobeva 2005; Kapoor 1987). These offered valuable guidance by way of documenting, step-by-step, the painstaking processes involved in conducting a Delphi study. In particular, the doctoral thesis of Poirier (2012) was extremely helpful, and offered an excellent, clear and concise guideline on how to structure the process.

Having read these and various papers (e.g. Poirier and Robinson 2014; Zins 2007a-d; Cottam et al 2004), I was satisfied that the Delphi method was an appropriate and viable way of investigating the information behaviour of cult media fans. The details of the Delphi study, including issues of sampling, coding and consensus measurement are presented in section 4 of this thesis.

3.3.3. Case studies

Case studies are a common research method in LIS (see Case 2012, p.223 for a comprehensive list of some notable examples). This method is usually employed to investigate the specific rather than the generic – indeed, results from a case study should not be considered generalizable. A case study is "designed to study the particular within context and has a very specific purpose" and aims to "provide a holistic account of the case and in-depth knowledge of the specific through rich descriptions situated in context" (Pickard 2013). As both Pickard (2013) and Case (2012) note, case studies are restricted to the investigation of single entities (e.g. an individual, organisation, community, institution), and *not* of phenomena.

Case studies are also widespread in fan studies. Examples of recent fan case studies include the longitudinal study of Belle & Sebastien fans over 10 years (Deller 2014); *Glee* fan communities on Twitter (Wood and Baughman 2012); and the relationship between fans and producers of the *X-Files* (Chin 2013). The method can be considered appropriate within fan studies since the field itself is comprised of many fandoms that are worthy of case study research. Individual fandoms can be considered single entities that provide sufficient bounds for case study research.

For the purposes of this thesis, more than one case study was conducted. Pickard describes this as a *collective case study*, "a research study that uses more than one case to investigate particular phenomena; usually the study is a collection of *instrumental* cases as it is rare for a study to focus on multiple cases for their own sake" (original italics). An instrumental case study is used in contrast to standard case studies to "examine a particular phenomenon" rather than a single entity (Pickard 2013). Case and Given (2016), and Gorman and Clayton (2005) use the term *multi-site* or *comparative case studies* to describe what Pickard terms the collective case study. In this thesis, three case studies were performed, and the results of these case studies were compared. Therefore, the term *comparative case studies* will be used.

For this final stage of the empirical work, two strands of research method were employed, constituting a mixed methods approach. The first, quantitative strand, involved tag analysis, performed on three separate websites used by fans. The second, qualitative strand, involved semi-structured interviews of 6 fans who were either top taggers on these websites, or tag wranglers on AO3. Together, these strands form the three comparative case studies.

Since case studies are a common and well-established research method in many disciplines, further discussion is not deemed appropriate here. Case and Given (2016), Pickard (2013), and Gorman and Clayton (2005) give excellent introductions to case studies within the field of LIS.

3.3.3.1. Methodological rationale

Owing to a long tradition of the case study method in both fan studies and LIS, it was considered appropriate for the final stage of empirical research. To complement the Delphi study, which sought to find generalizable results through the consensus of expert participants, case studies were chosen as a method to test the findings of the Delphi, on a small, focused scale. The method would allow for a more close quarters observation of fan activities through a narrower frame.

Case (2012) has warned against the limitations of case studies, in that their findings cannot be generalised, and that they only offer a snapshot of a single point in time, which may not offer a holistic portrayal of the object under investigation. Nevertheless, the purpose of *this* case study is not to attempt to make generalisations, but to test some of the findings of the Delphi study within the scope of the thesis itself, as opposed to that of a wider scale. It also attempts to test the Delphi findings through conducting *three* case studies, rather than one, in order to ensure increased validity through triangulation and comparison. It is also hoped that the case studies will allow for future work to be done at regular intervals, which will comprise a longitudinal study that should allow researchers to track the information behaviour of fans over time. The details of the case studies are presented in section 5 of this thesis.

3.3.3.2. Social media data analysis and tag analysis

For the case studies, it was decided to use social media data analysis to analyse the tagging practices of a group of fans on three platforms – Tumblr, Archive of Our Own, and Etsy. This decision was prompted by the notable mentions in the Delphi study of tag usage to gain information on a fandom (see also section 4.11, pp.210-211 for more on this):

> The first step in a fandom for me is to check out the tumblr tag and then dive into some fic (Participant 24).

> […]fans who know what it is that I study (mainly through my #transcultural fandom FTW tag) often send me examples that they've seen here and there; they share stories that might be relevant to my interests, and that kind of thing truly is invaluable… (Participant 14).

> And if I'm looking for fanfic, I can get recs on tumblr or by searching tags on AO3 (Participant 18).

As with the Delphi study, purposive sampling was employed in the choice of these sites. All three are very different (Tumblr being a primarily image-based social media site; Archive of Our Own a fanfiction repository, and Etsy a small-business and amateur crafts

marketplace), and so would give a wider range of variance. Yet they were purposive in that each would inspect different aspects of the research questions (Tumblr – how fans collect, share and communicate resources; AO3 – how fans act as information intermediaries and gatekeepers; Etsy – how fans make money).

Social media data analysis is the analysis of data (and metadata) generated by users of social media platforms. Various other methods come under the umbrella of social media data analysis, for example *social media analytics*, which is usually used in the field of business intelligence to measure customer engagement (Kobielus 2010); or *social network analysis*, which studies social groupings and which can be applied not only to the study of relationships between individuals, but also websites and hyperlinks (Thelwall 2004). The specific method used in the case studies here is *tag analysis*. Tagging is synonymous with what we know as folksonomy (a portmanteau of 'folk' and 'taxonomy', meaning a user-generated classification system created to organise content online). Thomas Vander Wal, who first coined the term 'folksonomy' in 2004, defines it as follows:

> Folksonomy is the result of personal free tagging of information and objects (anything with a URL) for one's own retrieval. The tagging is done in a social environment (usually shared and open to others). Folksonomy is created from the act of tagging by the person consuming the information.
>
> The value in this external tagging is derived from people using their own vocabulary and adding explicit meaning, which may come from inferred understanding of the information/object. People are not so much categorizing, as providing a means to connect items (placing hooks) to provide their meaning in their own understanding (Vander Wal 2007, n.p.).

Thus, we see that tags build the folksonomy. Tags, or hashtags (when tags are preceded by a '#' sign), are widely used and produced on social media platforms, such as Flickr and Twitter; but they are also used on other types of platforms such as online repositories (e.g. Academia.edu) and even online library catalogues.

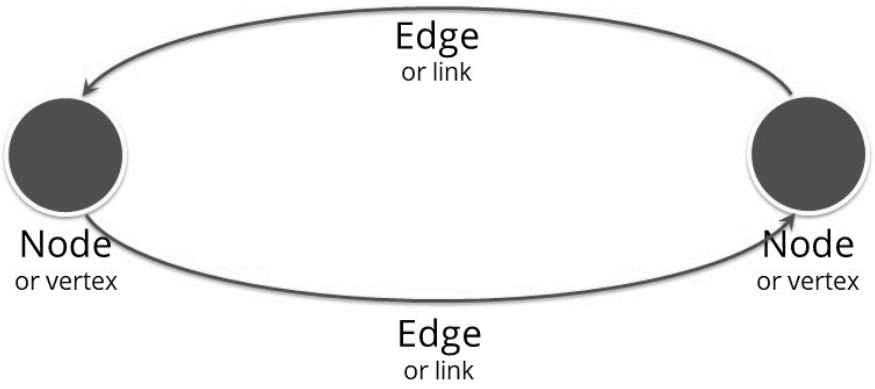


Figure 20: The basics of a social network (Source: Hawksey 2017).

Tag analysis as a research tool has its roots in hyperlink network analysis, or link analysis (Thelwall 2004), which in turn has its roots in social network analysis (Park and Thelwall 2003). Social network analysis (SNA) is a research approach and technique that has been widely used in the social sciences for many decades, in its recognisable form first being described in the 1930's (Carrington and Scott 2011, p.1). It takes as its premise the idea that "social life is created primarily and most importantly by relations and the patterns formed by these relations" (Marin and Wellman 2011, p.11). When people form networks, they bring with them "and exchange" resources. These resources can be tangible in form: money, goods, and services; or they may be intangible, such as information, expertise, and influence (Haythornthwaite 1996, p.323). People become 'nodes' (or vertices) in the network, network members or actors who are linked through relationships, or 'edges' (or links – see Figure 20). Social network analysis studies these relationships within a network for meaningful patterns that can tell us about the nature of the network, such as how connected each node in the network is, which node is the most connected, and through which relationships resource exchange works most efficiently.

There are several ways in which sense can be made of a network, which are as follows:

Degree: the number of connections that a node has. The more connections, the higher the degree.

Betweenness centrality: how often a node appears on the *shortest path* between two other nodes. The higher the betweenness centrality, the higher the importance of that node in exchanging a resource within the network.

Clustering: groups of highly interconnected nodes within a network. A cluster denotes nodes that can reach one another in only one step. This is a group of highly influential nodes.

Density: the degree to which a node is connected to all other nodes in the network.

Social networks are not merely restricted to people. In fact "any units that can be connected to other units can be studies as nodes" (Marin and Wellman 2011, p.11). Marin and Wellman (2011) give several examples, such as Web pages, journal articles, countries, neighbourhoods, departments within organisations, or positions (pp.11-12). In fact, it can be used to describe the relationships between units of information as well. It is thus not surprising that it has found applications within the field of LIS (Bawden and Robinson 2012, p.174; Otte and Rousseau 2002). The potential usefulness of the method in the discipline appears to have first been explicitly suggested by Haythornthwaite (1996) (although it should be noted that network analysis had been a well-established method within communication science previous to this, which has some overlap with LIS in certain respects). Haythornthwaite noted 5 aspects of information exchange that SNA is well able to shed light on (1996, pp.338-339). These are:

1. *Information needs*: information exchange between certain group members, and the type of information being exchanged, can tell the information provider how best to serve users.
2. *Information exposure:* relationships with highly influential network members can illustrate a person's level of exposure to information.

3. *Information legitimation*: measuring the strength of ties between network individuals can show how information is being passed on to others. The stronger the tie, the more legitimised the information (and therefore its source).
4. *Information routes*: establishing the routes of information exchange within the network is useful not only for describing information flows, but also which routes are most efficient.
5. *Information opportunities*: influential people in the network can control information flows between other individuals within the network, thus becoming information brokers or gatekeepers, regulating both information sources and outlets.

Since then, SNA has been used in a variety of papers within the field of LIS. Jiang, Zhang and Liu (2014) used the method to map the relationships between the editors of LIS journals in China; Jalalimanesh and Yaghoubi (2013) examined an Iranian interlibrary loan service to map the transfer of knowledge between institutions; Johnson (2004) used SNA to investigate how a group of residents in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, searched for information, finding that they often went to people they didn't know very well, but who had higher social capital; and Haythornthwaite and Wellman (1998) discovered how work and friendship ties affected the online and offline relationships of a university research group. This is but a small sample of works in this area – at the time of writing, LISTA lists 65 papers that use or mention social network analysis as a research method.

The growth of social network analysis over the past couple of decades is not surprising, considering the rise of the internet and the fact that it is, in effect, a vast social network in and of itself (Otte and Rousseau 2002, p.441). This gave rise to *hyperlink analysis* (Park and Thelwall 2003), or simply *link analysis* (Thelwall 2004), which "casts hyperlinks between Web sites (or Web pages) as social and communicational ties, applying standard techniques from

Social Network Analysis to this new data source" (Park and Thelwall 2003, n.p.). Here, the website is the node, and the hyperlink is the edge that connects websites. By analysing a network of hyperlinks, one can discern patterns between individuals, organisations, companies, and even nation states through their website links, much as one would by analysing offline social networks.

Not only can social network analysis methods can be applied to people, organisations and websites, it can also be applied to metadata stored within the Web. One of the ways in which this has taken shape over the past decade or so is in the form of *tag analysis*, where the network properties of tags are analysed. In this case, the nodes in the network are not people or organisations, but tags (or hashtags), for example on Twitter, Flickr, or Delicious. The edges between nodes in a tag network demonstrate when a tag is used in conjunction with another tag in the same post (see Figure 21).

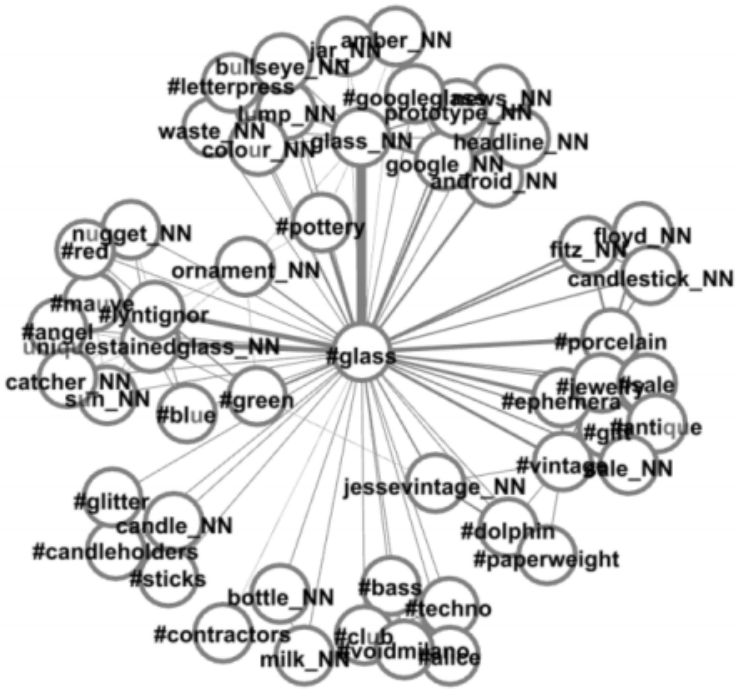


Figure 21: A co-occurence graph of the hashtag #glass. Source: Wang and Iwaihara (2015).

Tag analysis can be used to examine many facets of online phenomena, such as political sentiment on Twitter (Small 2011), usage patterns of bookmarking tags on Del.icio.us (Golder and Huberman 2006), and the semantic information in Flickr tags (Bolognesi 2016a). Tag analysis is particularly prevalent in the context of Twitter hashtags, of which there is much literature – recent research includes Rossi and Giglietto (2016), Wang, Liu and Gao (2016), Kotsakos et al (2015), Wang and Iwaihara (2015), and Cheong and Cheong (2011). A growing area of related research involves the merging of tag analysis and social network analysis, where the latter is applied to the analysis of tags in order to visualise and thus better understand the network-type properties of social media folksonomies (Cattuto et al 2007; Ma and Li 2014). Such analyses are presented in graph form, usually depicting a base tag as a central node in a network, connected to co-occurring tags – these graphs are called *co-occurrence graphs* (see Figure 21). A central node (in this case #glass) represents the base tag; tags that are co-occurring (i.e. that occur in the same post, or tweet) are joined to the central node by an edge. More complicated relationships between tags, such as group clustering etc., can be visualised by the application of various algorithms, which can depict tag usage amongst different communities, thus elucidating how patterns of tag usage differ between different groups and networks. This gives some insight into information exchange in online and social media settings.

There is some precedent to the use of tag analysis to describe the tagging behaviours of users within a particular information domain, although not to describe information behaviour. Trant (2009) gave an early overview of LIS and computer science articles on tagging and folksonomy, noting that tools "such as vocabulary analysis and classification, user interaction theory, and social network theory are used to describe and analyse the nature of tagging and folksonomy" (p.23); however, the idea of tag analysis as a viable method for studying information behaviour is not presented, nor does it appear to have been used as a method to study information behaviour at all.

Four examples of LIS papers using tag analysis from the past five years are detailed here. First, Ådland and Lykke (2012) examined cancer patients' tagging on the blogging site, Blogomkraeft.dk, comparing user tags to the formal browsing structure used on Cancer.dk (which hosts the blogging site). Their findings were interesting, in that they discovered that tags were being used, in some cases, to do more than simply describe, classify or organise posts. In contrast to straight bookmarking sites such as Delicious – where tagging more obviously fulfils a classificatory function – in this particular case, some patients were tagging posts with far more detail than had been expected. Tags were found to be "mainly factual, often detailed, and [did] not cover as many categories as tags in more general bookmarking systems do […] Some tags seem[ed] to add to and supplement the content instead of factually describing the content of the blog posting" (p.23). This suggests that tagging can be used in ways that are more diverse than the traditional view of a folksonomy (Vander Wal 2007) might suggest.

Chen and Ke (2013) looked specifically at CiteULike users tagging LIS journals, and interestingly sought to develop a tag categorisation system based upon their findings. Through their research they were able to build a "set of hybrid tag categories, consisting of title, function, content and topic related categories" which would "illustrate the distribution of used social tags and taggers' behaviour preferences" (p.654), with the idea that information architects could build better understand users' information tagging and organisation preferences. These proposed categories are, of course, relevant only as a method for tagging LIS journals (or indeed journals from other domains) on CiteULike, and cannot be generalised to the sites intended to be explored for the case studies in this thesis. However, it is interesting that they suggest linking synonymous tags as a way of improving their search retrieval efficiency:

> If a social bookmarking platform can build up links between terms (i.e. tag-to-title keywords and tag-to-tag) such as "library" and "museums", and highlight the linking line with various

> sizes dependent on co-occurrence frequency to recommend that users select related terms, it will be a useful basis for tagging or query formulation (Chen and Ke 2013, p.653).

This actually bears some similarity to Rafferty's democratic indexing and Bullard's curated folksonomy, although Chen and Ke's proposal seems to be for an automated solution, rather than a crowdsourced one.

Konkova et al's (2014) study investigated Flickr tags using a tag-labelling game, and subsequently classified these tags according to semantic content. They found that taggers usually used a balance of perceptual (describing what is in the image) and interpretive (describing a subjective view of what is going on in the image) tags when tagging collaboratively; however when guidelines and restrictions were put in place before tagging commenced, the interpretive type was more evident. This suggested that tagging systems can to some extent be managed and thus made more effective retrieval systems, although in their view, this does "depend on the taggers' understanding of the image use and on the nature of the tagging environment" (n.p.).

Estrada et al (2017) compared the tagging behaviour of amateurs versus domain experts in the tagging of moving images, using a tagging game called *Waisda?*. This study found that both groups had broadly similar tagging behaviours, using mostly 'factual' (descriptive) tags and more general terminology; although domain experts more often used low frequency, domain-specific terminology.

Looking specifically at the GLAM sector, Tonkin and Tourte (2016) have examined how crowdsourcing catalogues can help preserve digital cultural heritage; Li (2016) looks at tagging within the context of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's *One Met. Many World's* project; Clements and Liew (2016) discuss librarians' perceptions of tagging in public library catalogues; likewise, Ajiferuke, Goodfellow and Opesade (2015) have researched the more practical aspects of tagging on public library OPACs in Canada, New Zealand and the US. This is testament to the growing awareness of folksonomies within the field of LIS. These recent

studies have shown that there is some resistance to the use of tagging and folksonomies amongst library and information professionals, and that tagging, as currently implemented in the GLAM sector, is only making limited headway in many cases. There is still, however, much work to be done in this area, and considering the findings of the above studies, there is much that information professionals can learn about the benefits of tagging within LIS.

Whilst much work has been done to date on online tagging systems and tagging behaviour outside of the GLAM sector (see, for example, Marlow et al 2006; Ames and Naaman 2007; Costa et al 2013, etc.), little has specifically been done on fan-related tagging, or *fan-tagging*. There are however a few notable exceptions. Johnson (2014) has looked at the different folksonomy systems used in fanfiction archives, giving an interesting view of different approaches to organising fanfiction on 5 different online platforms. Rose (2013) implemented a virtual ethnography to investigate the types of tags used on Tumblr. And Gursoy (2015) looked at the tag types used in *Mass Effect* fanfiction posted on Archive of Our Own (AO3). Whilst these have all presented valuable and interesting insights into fan-tagging practices, they are by necessity limited either by an understandable lack of depth or generalisability. They did not use social media data/tag analysis or similar methods to explore any data collected; data visualisation was also absent.

Two points can be gleaned from these studies. Firstly, that tag analysis has been used successfully within LIS, and therefore is well-established within the field as a research method. Secondly, these studies do not use tag analysis as a method for measuring or describing information behaviour. This, twinned with a desire to bridge Floridi's cultural neo-dualism (see section 3.1.4), stimulated the choice of using tag analysis as the research method for the quantitative strand of the case studies. This is because, with regard to tag analysis, there is some considerable overlap between LIS and data science, data science being concerned with the patterns observed within networks of large data. There is not space enough here to discuss in-depth examples of network and tag analysis within the data science literature,

although the interested reader may find the following work by Kralj et al (2017), Bolognesi (2016b), García-Silva et al (2012), Cattuto et al (2007), and Heymann and Garcia-Molina (2006) worth reading.

3.3.3.3. Tag analysis and information behaviour

While tag analysis is not by any means a new research method, as we have seen, it has never before been used to describe information behaviour. It has been used, however, to describe not only how groups use tags to classify and organise information, but also to communicate, signal identity, and co-opt technologies in new and innovative ways. For example Wargo (2017) discussed how the #socialjusticewarrior tag is used to 'curate' LGBT youth activism on Tumblr; Heyd and Puschmann (2017) note the functional shift of tagging from content description to content meta-commentary; and Doerfel et al (2016) discovered how tagging on Bibsonomy reflects particular user behaviours, such as the influence of social ties, personal management strategies, type of resources bookmarked, and ease of site navigation.

These studies are useful in that they shed some light on tag users' behaviour in a general way – however, they are *not* conducted from a LIS perspective, nor is their intention to investigate information behaviour per se. For example, Wargo's (2017) paper discusses tagging from a textual and semiotic perspective; Heyd and Puschmann (2017) take a sociolinguistic and pragmatic stance, arguing that tags have undergone a functional shift, moving from online spaces to urban and public spaces. Doerfel et al (2016) investigate tagging through the prism of computer and data science, in particular human-computer interaction. Other research in computer and data science have looked at the network properties of tags, such as Yamaguchi et al (2015), Wang and Iwaihara (2015), and Cattuto et al (2007).

Where the research presented in this thesis differs from these studies is that it employs tag network analysis as a quantitative method to investigate human information behaviour, undertaken firmly within an LIS context. As far as can be ascertained, LIS has not

used either tag or network analysis in this way before i.e. as a method to investigate human information behaviour. Since information behaviour has been defined as "the totality of human behavior in relation to sources and channels of information, including both active and passive information seeking, and information use" (Wilson 2000), tag analysis can offer some unique insights into how humans relate to information, in the way they seek, classify, organise and manage it. Not only this, but it may also shed light on the thoughts and motivations behind human information behaviour.

First, and most obviously, using network theory measurements such as betweenness centrality can illustrate how effective a tag is as an information or content carrier; a densely clustered group of tags will imply that they are highly influential within the network. But the type of tags used, as well as their frequency, can provide important information on how humans interact with information. They can tell us how users organise information and communicate on different platforms (e.g. Flickr, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, Bibsonomy etc.), and whether those methods change in different environments. Tag types can also suggest the motivations behind tagging, and the community and/or cultural norms behind tagging practices (such as Wargo's #socialjusticewarrior users on Tumblr). For example, the use of the emoticon tag type (as seen in Table 23, p.243) can indicate how an individual tagger affectively annotates a resource. Looking at the use of the emoticon tag type within an entire Tumblr dataset, and comparing its use within an entire Instagram dataset, can tell us whether affective annotations are more important on Tumblr or Instagram. It can also tell us about the motivations for tag usage – are users more concerned with using tags to organise resources, or to signify social identity? Are they more interested in using tags to disseminate resources, or to annotate them?

This research builds on the premise that tags can provide a new and innovative method for investigating human information behaviour. Since this is a novel application for

this method within LIS, its use here is exploratory, but it is hoped that this can be refined and developed in further research.

3.3.3.4. Semi-structured interviews

Whilst tag analysis is a 'tried and tested' method within both data science, network science and LIS (thus bridging Floridi's gap), it was felt that a qualitative element would be needed to support the findings (harking back to Cresswell and Plano Clark's 2011 multiphase mixed methods design; see section 3.1.6), and therefore some small-scale, semi-structured email interviews were conducted to complement and test the results of the tag analysis. These constituted the second, qualitative strand of the third stage of empirical work.

Interviews have a long history as a qualitative research method within many fields of inquiry. Case and Given (2016, p.282) and Bawden and Robinson (2012, p.311) give some useful examples of interviews as a research method in LIS; Pickard (2013, ch.17) offers a useful overview on the use of interviews within LIS. The semi-structured interview is in the middle of the structured-unstructured interview continuum; whilst there is some structure in the form of pre-prepared questions or topics to discuss, the interviewer has the freedom to omit and add questions throughout the interview process, in response to the interviewee's answers. Additional questions may be asked to clarify a point, or to open up a new avenue of relevant inquiry. This particular style of interview was chosen as it allowed the amount of leeway appropriate to delve into a complex subject (tagging behaviour) when necessary, without encountering any of the potential 'messiness' of an unstructured interview.

In particular, interviews were conducted asynchronously via email, as the participants were based overseas and were not easily accessible. Pickard (2013) considers online interviewing the "most controversial" of data collection methods (p.205), due to the "lack of visual and verbal clues we are familiar with from everyday social interaction" (p.203). Mann and Stewart (2000, ch.6) give an in-depth review of online interviews, encouraging interviewers to use techniques such as mutual self-disclosure, use of electronic para-language

(such as emoticons and acronyms like 'LOL') to build a rapport with interviewees without the aid of visual and verbal cues. Another difficulty may be similar to that encountered by Freund and Fielding (2013), where some of their interviewees were initially suspicious and wanted confirmation that they were indeed fans and therefore trustworthy. However, since the Tumblr and Etsy participants in this case were approached from their respective online platforms, they were able to visit my homepage and see that I was indeed a fan myself. In the case of AO3, the participants were recruited through the site's management team, and my AO3 homepage was disclosed to the team so that my fan identity was clear. Asynchronous methods (as opposed to synchronous such as Skype or live chat) were chosen, due to the increased guarantee of anonymity (most participants chose to communicate through their fan username) and the expediency of having responses already in textual form and ready to be coded. The latter was important since the timescale at this stage of the study was very tight. Details of the interview process are given in section 5.7.

Again, purposive sampling of the interviewees was adopted, although criterion sampling was the variant used here – this type of sampling is used to collect participants who fulfil a certain criterion, and is particularly useful for quality assurance or validating previous findings. Participants in the cases of Tumblr and Etsy were approached for interview if they were the top two users of the tags in the dataset. If no response was forthcoming, the next most prolific tagger would be contacted and so on. In the case of AO3, tag wranglers who were experts in the Marvel Universe fandom were approached. Due to the limited timescale involved, only two from each site (for a total of six interviews) were able to be interviewed. Thus, the results of this strand of the research cannot in any way be justified as generalizable, although this was not their desired intent – the purpose here was to bolster and/or test the validity of the tag analysis data – and to lend an insight into the human motivations behind the findings. Through the use of tag analysis and interviews, conducted over three very different online sites for comparative purposes, the intention was to have a more rounded appreciation

of fans' information behaviour – through the lens of tagging – and of how they deal with information on the online platforms they inhabit.

The details of the case studies and the related methods used are presented in Section 5 of this thesis.

3.4. Ethics

As this study is cross-disciplinary, and involves mixed methods, a section on ethics is considered appropriate here. Ethics "reflect our beliefs about what is just and right behavior versus what we judge to be unjust and wrong" (Case and Given 2016, p.231), and in social research standards of conduct have been developed to reflect group consensus on what those beliefs might be. Case and Given (2016, pp.231-233) names these as:

- No harm should come to participants in a study.
- Study participants should not be deceived and misled in any way.
- Participation in any investigation should be voluntary.
- Any data collected about individuals should be confidential.

In mixed methods research, ethics can become fraught as they:

> harbor some specific ethical dilemmas that are particularly pronounced when researchers begin to integrate these methods at various stages of their ongoing projects […] For example, a researcher may violate a prior informed consent agreement by taking information from one study and using it as input for a (qualitative) component of another study without getting direct permission from the respondent to have his or her name used and identified as part of a sampling pool for that second, qualitative component (Hesse-Biber 2010, p.56).

While the results of the Delphi study certainly conceptually informed the case studies, there was no direct use of any data that could identify the Delphi participants in the case studies. One participant from the Delphi study did go on to become a participant in the case studies, but this participant was given separate information and consent sheets, and was essentially treated as a new participant when they joined the case studies. Throughout all of

the empirical work, no participant was identified by name – each was given a number (Delphi study) or letter (case studies) to ensure anonymity.

It is important in mixed methods to consider ethical issues connected to each type of research method undertaken. Throughout their work, Cresswell and Plano Clark (2011) note the importance of tackling ethical considerations for each separate study undertaken, not merely for the entire research process as a whole. This becomes doubly important when the research is multidisciplinary, as it is in this case. Library and information science has a long history of interdisciplinary research, as information work takes place in a number of different domains and settings (e.g. hospitals, universities, laboratories, homes, etc.). Each setting will necessitate different ethical standards or considerations. Nevertheless, Carlin (2003) has noted a marked emphasis on the ethics of professional practice within the LIS literature, as opposed to research ethics. Since LIS is a "'net importer' of research strategies (i.e., theoretical and methodological approaches), it could be assumed that research ethics would have been adopted, or formed the basis for debate" (Carlin 2003, p.5). Yet still, there does not seem to be an overarching framework for interdisciplinary research ethics within LIS. A search of "research ethics" on LISTA discovered 173 papers, although most of these appeared to relate to ethics within the context of the research being presented. Carlin's paper, as far as can be ascertained, remains the only LIS paper to discuss the importance of ethical considerations within interdisciplinary research.

Carlin notes 5 points which researchers should be aware of when conducting interdisciplinary research (2003, p.14). These are:

- *Decontextualization:* removing the research strategy from the context of its occurrence.
- *Suitability:* is the research strategy being used outside the bounds of its applicability?
- *Transformation:* has the research strategy been changed to fit a particular research topic of case?

- *Traducement:* have the theoretical underpinnings of the original research strategy been diminished or ignored?
- *Dissemination:* the damage caused by disseminating logically incoherent or inferior versions of the appropriated research strategy.

These are all important points to consider in interdisciplinary research, and for this reason considerable effort has gone into discussing the backgrounds and histories of the multidisciplinary research methods used, and of the ethics involved with each. Two aspects in particular deserve more in-depth treatment, and these are ethics in fan studies, and ethics in web crawling.

3.4.1. Ethics in fan studies

Ethics is, rightly and uniquely, a major concern within fan studies. This is because fan practice is traditionally, and to some extent still is today, considered deviant. Writings such as slash and other forms of fanworks are sexually explicit and exposure as a fan can be potentially damaging to an individual. Whilst most fanworks are published on the internet, and are therefore considered freely available to the public, Busse and Hellekson (2012) remind us that "most online media fans who share creative works online protect their privacy via pseudonyms. They expect that the shared online spaces are at least partially protected" (p.42). It might be better to consider these online spaces as 'semi-public' or 'semi-private'; fans for the most part do not expect their work to come under the scrutiny of non-fans, and certainly not academics. This makes the work of acafans difficult because "negotiating expectations of privacy in the context of cultural production with academic demands of citeability is […] a project made difficult because cultural production and publication have the public, not the private, at their center" (Busse and Hellekson 2012, p.42). Not only this, but they also make it clear that library and archive workers should be aware of a fan's expectation of anonymity when working on fan collections, as in many cases – particularly before wide mainstream use of the internet – fans:

> ..wrote under their legal names with an expectation of privacy – and of course they could hardly have predicted that fanzines would be collected in libraries or digitized and spread worldwide. […] As an analysis of fan artworks moves mainstream, scholars working with private or library collections – and the library archivists themselves – have an ethical obligation to protect the privacy of writers (p.43).

Recent events have shown how precarious the line between fan and academic research can be. Kelley (2016) gives an account of a fanfiction course at an American university, which used certain fanfics as required reading, and which students then had to comment on. None of the authors were advised that their work was to be scrutinised as a part of the course. After one author received comments that were "bizarrely tone-deaf, condescending, rude, and more than that, completely out of step and touch with all fannish norms" (as quoted in Kelley 2016, 1.2), they wrote a Tumblr blog post warning the fan community of the course's existence.

The issue is complicated by the position of the aca-fan as both fan and researcher. This has been discussed previously (see section 3.1.1.1), but is mentioned here again because of the ethics of this dual role. "Even as we see ourselves as fans first", Busse and Hellekson note, "we occupy a position of power, both in being able to influence public perception and in being able to select which semiprivate utterances suddenly gain more attention (2012, p.52). Indeed, while Freund and Fielding (2013) observe that being a fan can be beneficial in gaining access to participants, this doesn't necessarily mean that those participants are not aware of the power the aca-fan holds, or mistrustful of how they will be represented. Fielding points out that during her study, "after contacting me and speaking with me extensively, one individual did decide to withdraw from the process because they did not wish to sign the consent form and give me their name" (Freund and Fielding 2013, p.332). Both authors also found that they were accepted by the participants after they were able to prove that they were indeed fans.

Nevertheless, the fan part of the acafan identity can remain problematic even after acceptance. The researcher has to be careful of how they present their own fannish identities and "remain silent on their opinions of various aspects of the fan community in order to facilitate true comments" from participants (Freund and Fielding 2013, p.333); and of course the "over-identification with the subjects that are drawn into our research gaze might lead us towards unethical practices" (Whiteman 2016, p.318). Freund also mentions cases where the participants became so comfortable with her that some "'friended' me on various social media sites, but did not realise the extent of their personal information that I had access to once they did so" (Freund and Fielding 2013, p.332). Again, this touches on Busse and Hellekson's point about an expectation of privacy, and I would posit that this does not only exist in fandom, but in most if not all online spaces.

As authors and creators, it is still important that fans be given due credit for the work they produce (Hellekson and Busse 2012, p.43). This can be problematic when these works are in some way considered 'deviant', and the protection of sources becomes an issue. Since these works may "deal with delicate issues related to gender, sexuality, confidentiality and the law" (Freund and Fielding 2013, p.333), it is important to give the authors of such work the requisite protection. This can disrupt academic standards of proper citation, another aspect in which the duality of the aca-fan role makes itself evident, and is particularly apposite to this research, since it deals particularly with issues of copyright and the legality of fanworks. In writing this thesis, there is a possibility of outing my participants and risking their exposure to legal threats. Therefore, safeguards had to be put into place.

In order to address these issues, Busse and Hellekson have advocated the ethical stance of 'fans first' – avoiding harm; respecting their privacy; protecting from any harm that may be incurred by the research process or its publication, and from unnecessarily disrupting

the phenomena being studied; and ensuring that the research is consensual (2012, p.44)[46]. This stance has been adopted throughout this research in dealing with fans. Each study was put through an institutional ethics review board, which required all participants to sign a consent form and be given an information sheet detailing the research, their rights and the contact details of the researcher and base institution. These are available in the Appendices, and are discussed in the appropriate sections of this thesis. Apart from these mandatory requirements, others were put into place based upon Busse and Hellekson's 'fans first' guideline. These are as follows:

- All fan participants were given numerical or alphabetical identifiers to ensure privacy.
- When particular fanworks are cited, a URL is not given. Where possible, the following format (as used in the *Journal of Transformative Works and Cultures*) is used: source, user or community name, and date of post.
- If a fan's identity is discernible in a screenshot, the related information is obscured.

This requires constant vigilance on the part of the researcher, which was far from easy to maintain at times. Nevertheless any mishaps were thankfully averted and it can confidently be concluded that all fan identities and rights to privacy were both valued and maintained throughout the study.

3.4.2. Ethics in web crawling

The tag analysis section of the case studies required the use of web crawling, which brings with it particular ethical concerns. Web crawlers are programs that trawl the internet, finding and downloading web pages, and they are now a vital part of how the internet operates. For example, the Internet Archive uses web crawlers to download and archive websites; Google and other search engines use them to index the internet; spammers use

[46] The fans first guideline has been incorporated into Busse and Hellekson's journal, *Transformative Works and Cultures*. See http://journal.transformativeworks.org/index.php/twc/about/submissions, particularly the section 'Protection of fan sources', for more details.

them to send out spam. They are also a powerful research and data collection tool within several disciplines, such as computer science, data science, information science, network science, and the digital humanities.

Because web crawlers are now freely available to download and use on the internet, these tools are now potentially in the hands of those who do not possess network knowledge and do not appreciate how web crawlers can affect how websites operate (Thelwall and Stuart 2006, p.1771). And since crawlers are automated programs, it is easy to leave them running over long periods of time without monitoring or maintaining them. As such, it is important that researchers understand the repercussions of using web crawlers as a part of their research.

Thelwall and Stuart (2006, pp.1774-1775) note some points that researchers should be aware of when using crawlers. These are:

- *Denial of service:* a server busy responding to crawlers may be slow to respond to other users, undermining its primary purpose.
- *Cost:* web crawlers incur costs for the web owners by using up their allotted bandwidth.
- *Privacy:* some of the data downloaded by crawlers may be sensitive and/or invade privacy, especially if it is used in certain ways.
- *Copyright:* crawlers ostensibly act illegally when they make unauthorised copies of webpages. Whilst the inaction of the courts (e.g. the Internet Archive and Google cache are still storing copies of pages) would suggest that this is a matter of little importance, it is still worth bearing in mind.

In terms of denial of service, researchers should take care to tailor crawler parameters to the size of the site they are crawling. Crawling a large institutional site, such as a university website, is very different to crawling a small, personal website. In the case of small websites, cost might be a huge factor, as an entire month's worth of bandwidth could be eaten up by a

single crawling session. Privacy is a particularly significant issue in the era of big data, where very personal information is readily uploaded to the Web via social media sites and can be harvested in vast numbers. Digital data is far more robust than analogue forms; "[t]he longevity of data and its unanticipated uses call into question researchers' ability to guarantee privacy and anonymity to subjects in the present", since "[i]nformation that a user later deletes online may still remain in a dataset collected years before – and conceivably remain there for generations" (Sula 2016, p.19). Copyright may have lasting implications if the work that the research is based on is published in the future.

Connected to all these aspects is respecting robots.txt, a widely followed though not standard protocol, which allows web owners to protect their sites from being crawled, or to stipulate how their sites are to be crawled. However, it is important to realise that because the protocol is not a standard, crawlers can be programmed to circumvent it. Indeed, research has found that some commercial web crawlers still consistently ignore or misinterpret robots.txt (Giles, Sun and Councill 2010; Sun, Councill and Giles 2010). If this is the case with commercial web crawlers, it is likely that it is also the case with web crawlers used by private individuals.

Thelwall and Stuart (2006, p.1777) proposed a web crawling policy, which is as follows:

- Email webmasters of large sites that are about to be crawled to allow them to make an informed decision to opt out.
- Obey the robots.txt convention.
- Follow the robots guidelines.

This policy was followed in the tag analysis used in the case studies (see chapter 5). In addition, other measures were put into place, which are detailed below. As it turned out, a web crawler was only used on AO3. With both Tumblr and Etsy, the websites' API's were used, and these have built-in mechanisms for regulating crawling; since the 'Romy' tag sees comparatively little usage (as it is a small fandom), the crawls were not expected to take up

too much time or resources. With AO3, the SocSciBot crawler was used (see section 5.6.2 for more detail on this programme). A prerequisite of use was to give ones email address, which would be used to send an automated message to the website being crawled[47] – this allowed for AO3 to opt out of the crawl or the wider research if they so chose. To keep the crawl's tax on the system to a minimum, the crawl depth was set to only 1. Any parts of the site that were protected by robots.txt were respected.

There is also the issue of what happens to data after extraction. This includes anonymising extracted personal data; considering the dissemination of extracted data; and the possibility that profiles can be reconstructed using data aggregated from multiple sources (Alim 2014). Wilkinson and Thelwall (2009) have discussed how ethical procedures may change depending on how the research objects are conceived: "a distinction can be made between individuals and documents as research objects. Although individuals tend to be protected by ethical procedures, documents can often be used without creating ethical issues" (p.394). This is problematic in two senses. For example, in the case of fanworks, which might contain sensitive text and/or images, is it reasonable to make an ethical distinction between the fanwork and its creator? And in the case of the dataset, is the dataset not a document, even if it contains vast amounts of personal data?

The datasets in the tag analysis section of this study (and indeed, in the Delphi study) have thus been anonymised, and any data which might lead to the identity of those included on the dataset (such as blog URL) have been removed. Busse and Hellekson (2012) make the point that in the age of online search, such tokens might not necessarily ensure privacy or anonymity; but the preservation of a safe space "signals to the fan that her space is worthy of protection, however small" (p.45). As far as possible, this study has attempted to uphold that expectation of privacy, even in a dataset which may receive little to no attention, but which may be available years later to researchers and the public alike.

[47] For more details on SocSciBot's terms of conditions, see http://socscibot.wlv.ac.uk/

3.5. Summary

A simplified diagram of the research process is given here, based on Cresswell and Plano-Clark's (2011) multiphase research design (as shown in Figure 17, p.139). This gives a clear summary of the entire research workflow.

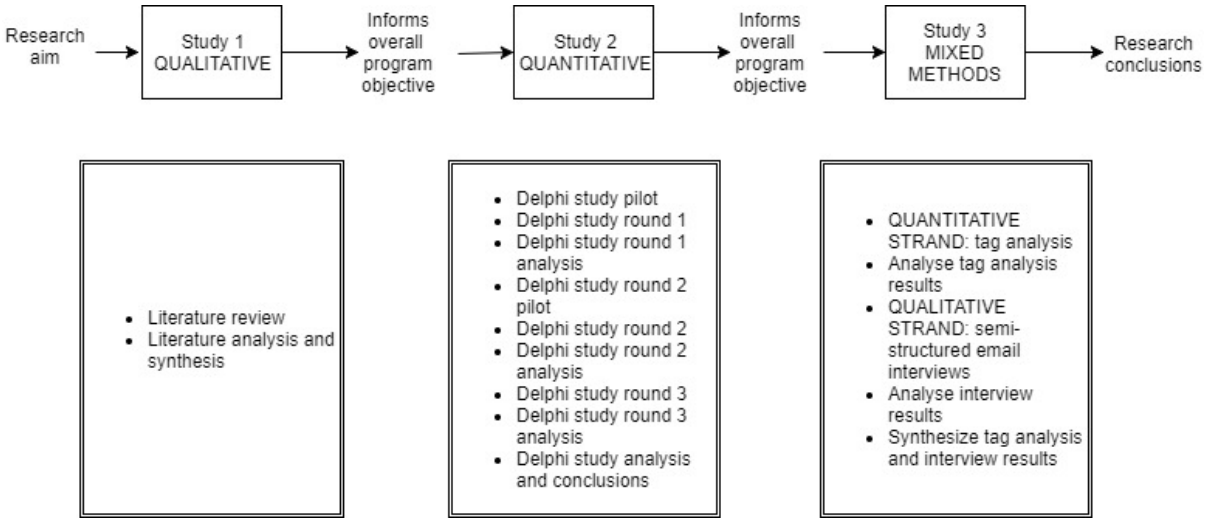


Figure 22: Research workflow.

4. PART FOUR – The Delphi study

4.1. Objectives of the Delphi study

The objectives of the Delphi study are: a) to satisfy the objectives of the thesis, as outlined on p.9; b) to test the conclusions of the literature review. Specifically, these are:

1. To delineate the online activities of fans and thus narrow down to what extent the information activities of fans are intrinsic to fans themselves (whether online or offline), or merely an affordance of the internet itself.
2. To delineate the offline activities of fans, for the same reasons as above.
3. To ascertain the information behaviour and resources of fans (which may affect LIS).
4. To ascertain the *participatory* aspects of fan culture, especially with regards to mentorship, support and collaboration (which may affect education, publishing and the media industry).
5. To ascertain fans' attitude towards the 'pro-am' activities of fans (which may affect publishing, copyright and the media industry).

By extension these objectives will test the model developed from the literature review (see Figure 14, p.113), particularly these aspects:

- Can the model be applied both in online and offline contexts?
- Does it adequately represent the information behaviour of fans?
- Does it reflect the participatory aspects of fandom?
- Does it reflect the relationship fans have with producers?
- Does it reflect the 'professional-amateur' activities of fans?

4.2. Criteria for panel recruitment

As discussed in section 3.3.2, the Delphi study's main aim is to gain consensus between experts. The researcher presents a group of experts with a statement or problem, and invites them to anonymously express their opinion in written form, which the researcher then analyses and restructures, returning them to the group of experts for further comment in a series of rounds. The purpose of using field experts is that they possess unique insights into the field as it currently stands, and are best able to judge the future of that field (hence the Delphi's original remit as a measure for forecasting future trends; Helmer and Rescher 1958, pp.57-59; Pickard 2013). For this reason, the criteria for panel recruitment required field experts for this part of the study.

Firstly, it was essential that all members of the panel be cult media fans, or fans of some sort of media franchise. Thus, other types of fans, enthusiasts or followers (e.g. sports fans; pop fans; automobile enthusiasts, etc.) were excluded from the panel criteria. Problematically, whilst fans might be considered experts in their field, this is by no means in the traditional sense, nor in the sense intended by the standard conception of a Delphi study. One does not require a qualification in a certain franchise in order to become a fan of that franchise. And as discussed in section 2.1.1.2., there is little homogeneity between fans (Busse and Gray 2011), thus making it exceedingly difficult to measure or quantify what exactly defines a fan.

It was therefore deemed prudent to introduce some sort of control to the panel, and it was decided to recruit acafans (see p.125, note 43 for more on acafans) as well as 'regular' fans onto the panel. This would allow 'true' experts in the scholarly and/or intellectual sense to add their voice to the study, and to ascertain whether there are any differences between the opinions of 'regular' fans and acafans.

According to Pickard's guidelines (2013, pp.152-153), this was the only aspect of the study that deviated from the normal provisions of a Delphi study (inasmuch as, experts in the

traditional sense did not make up the entire body of the panel). This study can therefore be considered a modified Delphi study, which in light of these modifications has been termed a 'Serious Leisure Delphi'. It is hoped that this serious leisure variant will be useful in the study of other serious leisure-type communities and the information behaviours adopted by them.

Because the particular target group was known from the outset (i.e. fans), a purposive sampling technique was used. Purposive sampling (also known as purposeful or deliberate sampling) is in contrast to probability or random sampling, which aims for representativeness in its participants; "samples are selected deliberately, according to some criterion drawn from the overall logic and strategy of the study" (Punch 2014, p.164). Naturally, probability sampling is associated with quantitative research, whilst purposive sampling is associated with qualitative research.

Within mixed methods, both qualitative and quantitative sampling techniques may be employed depending on the nature of the study being conducted. Because the target population for this study was already known (fans), and because a random sampling of participants was therefore not desirable, purposive sampling was the obvious choice. There are several different types of purposive sampling which can be used; these are discussed by Bryman (2015, p.409), Punch (2014, pp.160-163), and Daniel (2012, pp.88-91). Teddlie and Yu (2007) give a list of these types, reproduced in Table 13.

For the purposes of this study, maximum variation sampling was used. This is one of the most common forms of purposive sampling used in qualitative studies, where "diverse individuals are chosen who are expected to hold different perspectives on the central phenomenon" (Cresswell and Plano Clark 2011, p.173). Since the strategy was to recruit fans from a wide range of different fandoms, who would contribute diverse opinions to a broad research question, this was felt to be the ideal choice of sampling technique.

A. Sampling to Achieve Representativeness or Comparability

1. Typical Case Sampling
2. Extreme or Deviant Case Sampling (also known as Outlier Sampling)
3. Intensity Sampling
4. Maximum Variation Sampling
5. Homogeneous Sampling
6. Reputational Case Sampling

B. Sampling Special or Unique Cases

7. Revelatory Case Sampling
8. Critical Case Sampling
9. Sampling Politically Important Cases
10. Complete Collection (also known as Criterion Sampling)

C. Sequential Sampling

11. Theoretical sampling (also known as Theory-Based Sampling)
12. Confirming and Disconfirming Cases
13. Opportunistic Sampling (also known as Emergent Sampling)
14. Snowball Sampling (also known as Chain Sampling)

D. Sampling Using Combinations of Purposive Techniques

Table 13: Typology of purposive sampling types (Teddlie and Yu 2007, p.81).

4.3. Ethics

As per institution requirements, the study was approved by the City, University of London ethics committee. A detailed, committee-approved information sheet was sent to all potential participants along with a formal study invitation. Also attached was a committee-approved consent form, which participants were required to fill out and return (digitally or physically) before undertaking the study (see Appendix B, p.334, and Appendix C, p.335). More details on ethics is given in section 3.4.

4.4. The first pilot

Before the Delphi study could begin, it was deemed prudent to launch a small-scale pilot. The reasons for this were as follows:

1. To check the viability and/or answerability of the questions;
2. To check the validity of the terminology used, and whether they were readily understandable to cult media fans;
3. To ascertain whether the questions were relevant to cult media fans.

These concerns stemmed primarily from the fact that cult media fans engage in widely divergent practices, and develop differing terminologies, depending on their fandom and/or which fan community they belong to.

Five pilot study subjects were selected from my own contacts, thus forming a convenience sample. Each participant was a self-identified fan, and had either produced fanworks, shared them on the internet, or had attended fan conventions. They were chosen both for convenience (in terms of accessibility) and for their knowledge of, and participation, in a fandom or fandoms. Each was invited to comment on the suitability and viability of the round 1 Delphi questions by email. I knew each of the participants to varying degrees – this may have engendered bias in the responses. However, this was not expected, as no personal details or sensitive information was required from the participants, only a judgement as to whether the pilot questions were appropriate, as well as any suggestions as to their improvement.

Four of the five subjects approached responded. Of these, three of the four suggested improvements, which are detailed as follows:

> I would want a bit more clarification as to whether you want an answer that applies generally or one that is more specific to my "fandom". Also, I find that question three would definitely need a bit more clarification in terms of what you mean by "sources of information". I think that phrase is a bit too broad.
>
> All looks fine, except I don't understand what you mean in q. 5. Can you be a "professional" fan?
>
> I'm not sure I understand what you mean by professional fandom? Do you mean like Sherlock the BBC show or do you mean very successful fan artists? Are you asking how I can influence professional fan artists?

These comments led to further refining of the Delphi Round 1 questionnaire, and a greater confidence in the suitability of the questions.

4.5. Recruitment

Two methods of purposive sampling were used for recruitment. The first involved emailing invitations out to people who were *known by me* to be present or former cult media fans, either from the my own contacts, or from the activity of individuals that I was following within fan communities, but who were not known to me personally. The second method was a call to participants via social media, on Twitter and Tumblr.

For the former method, invitations were sent to potential participants who were known by me to be cult media fans, and who were involved in fan activity and/or the creation of fanworks, both online and offline.

For the latter method, three separate calls were posted, and meta-tags were used to specifically address and target cult media fans and acafans[48]. The tweets were also posted on the #fanstudies Twitter feed for maximum exposure to the relevant participant pool. Respondents were therefore assumed to self-identify as fans, and their levels of fan activity were vetted through examination of the Twitter feeds, Tumblr posts, and any publicly available personal websites or blogs posted on these platforms. All respondents to the call were deemed to meet the recruitment criteria in this way.

In all, a total of 45 potential participants were sent formal invitations, information sheets and consent forms. Nineteen were contacted via my own contact list; 25 via social media. The final participant was a referral from another panel member. Of the 19 who were contacted from my own contact list, 10 agreed to participate in the study; the remainder did not reply to the invitation for unknown reasons. Of the 25 who expressed an interest in participating in the study via social media, 22 agreed to participate in the study. Of these, two returned the consent form but dropped out of the study without further explanation. Counting

[48] Tags used were #fans, #acafans, #creators, #fanstudies.

the extra participant who was gained upon referral, the total amount of participants in the first round was 31.

4.6. Materials & equipment

All participants were sent a formal invitation by email, which included an information sheet and consent form (see Appendix B, p.334, and Appendix C, p.335). All questionnaires were sent out and returned by email. The first round questionnaire was copied into the body of the email for ease of access (i.e. panel members were able to answer in the body of the reply if they wished). Round two questionnaires were more complex and were in the form of a Likert scale, which were attached to an email. This questionnaire was presented in two file formats – a Microsoft Word macro-enabled .docx file, and a .pdf file created in Adobe Livecycle, which could be filled in with Adobe Reader. Round three questionnaires were conducted online via eSurvey Creator[49]. The process of conducting the Delphi rounds is complex and discussed in detail later in this chapter. Round 1 is discussed in section 4.7 (p.187); Round 2 in section 4.9 (p.196); and Round 3 in section 4.10 (p.201)

Initial coding and analysis of the round one questionnaires was done using the qualitative analysis software, NVivo10 (and later NVivo11). This involved coding the raw data from the first round responses into themes which were then broken down into statements for the second round questionnaire.

The NVivo software was chosen for three reasons. The first was that it had been previously used for qualitative analysis of a digital ethnography carried out for my Masters dissertation. I was thus familiar with the software and how it worked, and I had carried out training in it in the first year of my Ph.D research. The second reason was that NVivo allowed for the easy and intuitive coding of text, and since the data from the Delphi was to be text-based, and the coding of text is an integral part of discourse analysis (Schönfelder 2011), NVivo

[49] https://www.esurveycreator.com/

was found to be eminently appropriate for this task. The last reason was because it allowed for the quick and easy coding of text in a self-contained digital space. Thus textual resources could be coded, searched and cross-referenced in a quicker, more efficient manner than analogue procedures can afford.

4.7. Round 1

Round 1 questionnaires were sent to panel members via email, after consent forms had been returned. Questionnaires were also returned via email. Panel members were give 3 weeks to return their responses; two reminders were sent in the final week of the round. Those who no longer wished to take part in the study were free to do so by simply making no response. Thirty-one responses were given out of a total of 45 contacted.

The questionnaire comprised 5 questions (see Appendix D, p.338). Each question reflected key areas identified in the literature review as being significant in cult media fan activity. These five areas were based on the 5 questions generated from the literature review on p.119, and are listed as follows:

- Online fan activity;
- Offline fan activity;
- Information resources;
- Participatory culture;
- Produsage and pro-ams

The aim of the initial questionnaire was to glean ideas and opinions from the panel members, and also to ascertain the range of issues that were considered important to the participants and their fan experiences. As such, questions were designed to be as open as possible, with plenty of scope for in-depth response. As noted above, the practicality and applicability of these questions were tested in the pilot study, and were fine-tuned to meet the suggestions of the pilot participants.

Delphi panel members were invited to write as much or as little as they deemed necessary for the round 1 questionnaire. This was to elicit as many themes for inclusion in the study as possible.

4.7.1 Round 1 analysis

Analysis of the first round was challenging due to the sheer volume of data generated by the 31 panel members. As previously noted, many fans are very engaged with and willing to analyse their own behaviour, as evidenced by fan practices such as meta (Derecho 2006; Karpovich 2006). As panel members were encouraged to write as much as they desired for round one, a wide range of responses was generated: some a few sentences long, others almost essay-length. Many expressed strong and/or complex opinions. In all, the responses yielded a total of 24,040 words, which were subsequently analysed.

Text analysis itself is a critical stage in the Delphi process as this is the point where the study is most susceptible to researcher bias (Williams and Webb 1994). This was avoided by introducing an inductive approach to the coding (Thomas 2006; Zhang and Wildemuth 2005). All responses were imported into NVivo10 and each response was coded to nodes related to themes that emerged during the literature review. However, following concepts of emergent design (Pickard 2013) and inductive coding (Thomas 2006) these themes were refined and/or added to as the coding progressed, in order to ensure that no element of the responses was left out. Thus, if a certain statement did not adequately fit into a given theme, a new theme was created, wherever possible, to accommodate that statement. In all, an exhaustive list of 18 themes was generated from this initial analysis (these themes are represented by the section chapters of the literature review – see section 3.2, pp.139-140 for the full list of themes).

Once completed, NVivo was used to calculate word frequencies for each question. This gave a general idea of concepts and ideas that were most prevalent within the responses. A cluster analysis (i.e. the clustering of objects within a group that are statistically similar with

one another) of certain words might have generated some basic concepts or themes to take into the second round of the Delphi. There was, however, not enough data for such an analysis. Schönfelder (2011) has criticised NVivo for being a) more suited to the early stages of data analysis; b) limited in terms of in-depth analysis; c) focused on the quantification of qualitative data; and at this stage of the analysis these limitations became clear. For example, simple text analysis such as creating lists of word frequencies would bring up 'fan' or 'fans' at the top word on the list, which was, of course, redundant. Creating stop word lists was extremely time consuming. Another example was that annotations of the responses was not possible, and also could not be coded.

In light of this, it was therefore decided to do further analysis of the data manually, which would enable a closer reading of the text. Using NVivo's query function, a report was created for each theme, which was then printed out. Each document was again read through carefully several times, with further refinements made using a highlighter pen and annotations. From this round of analysis, a master list of thematic units was generated, each described by an accompanying statement (Appendix E, p.339). Statements were, as far as possible taken from the panel members' own words, and each was assigned an appropriate code. Each statement was designed to ensure that *all* concepts present in the responses were covered. If a concept was not covered, a new statement was created for the list.

At this point, it was decided to condense and combine some of the themes presented. The reason for this was that some of the themes had very few units assigned to them, and were close enough conceptually to be merged. This would also aid in the simplification and clarity of the data analysis. Thus, the themes of *Education* and *Libraries* (both under the overarching theme of *Social Effect*) were merged, becoming *Education and Information Provision*; and the themes of *Publishing* and *Copyright* (also both under *Social Effect*) were also merged. This brought the number of themes to a total of 15.

The final, exhaustive and inclusive list included 155 thematic codes with accompanying statements – this list, and related statistics, can be found in Appendix H (p.383). These were arranged under the following themes and sub-themes (the statistics for these themes can be seen in Appendix I, on p.495):

- Fan communities
    - Online community
    - Offline community
    - Participatory culture
    - Social & knowledge capital
    - Conflict
- Fan information behaviour
    - Communication
    - Information seeking
    - Information organisation
    - Resources
    - Produsage & user-generated content
- Social effect
    - Media industry
    - Publishing & copyright
    - Education & information provision
    - Charities, advocacy, activism and support
    - Pro-ams & amateur professionals

Other documents generated from this analysis included:

1. A list of information resources used by respondents in their fan activities (appendix F, p.345);
2. A list of thematic units, arranged by participant (appendix G, p.348);

3. A list of thematic units, arranged by frequency (appendix H, p.383);
4. A list of thematic units, arranged by question (appendix I, p.395).

Due to the volume of text that required analysis, this stage of the Delphi process took approximately eight weeks.

4.7.2 Example of process

Analysis of Round 1 results is given in this section, using Participant 22 as an example. This participant was chosen as their responses were short enough to be reproduced here without introducing unnecessary complications. Figure 23 reproduces Participant 22's

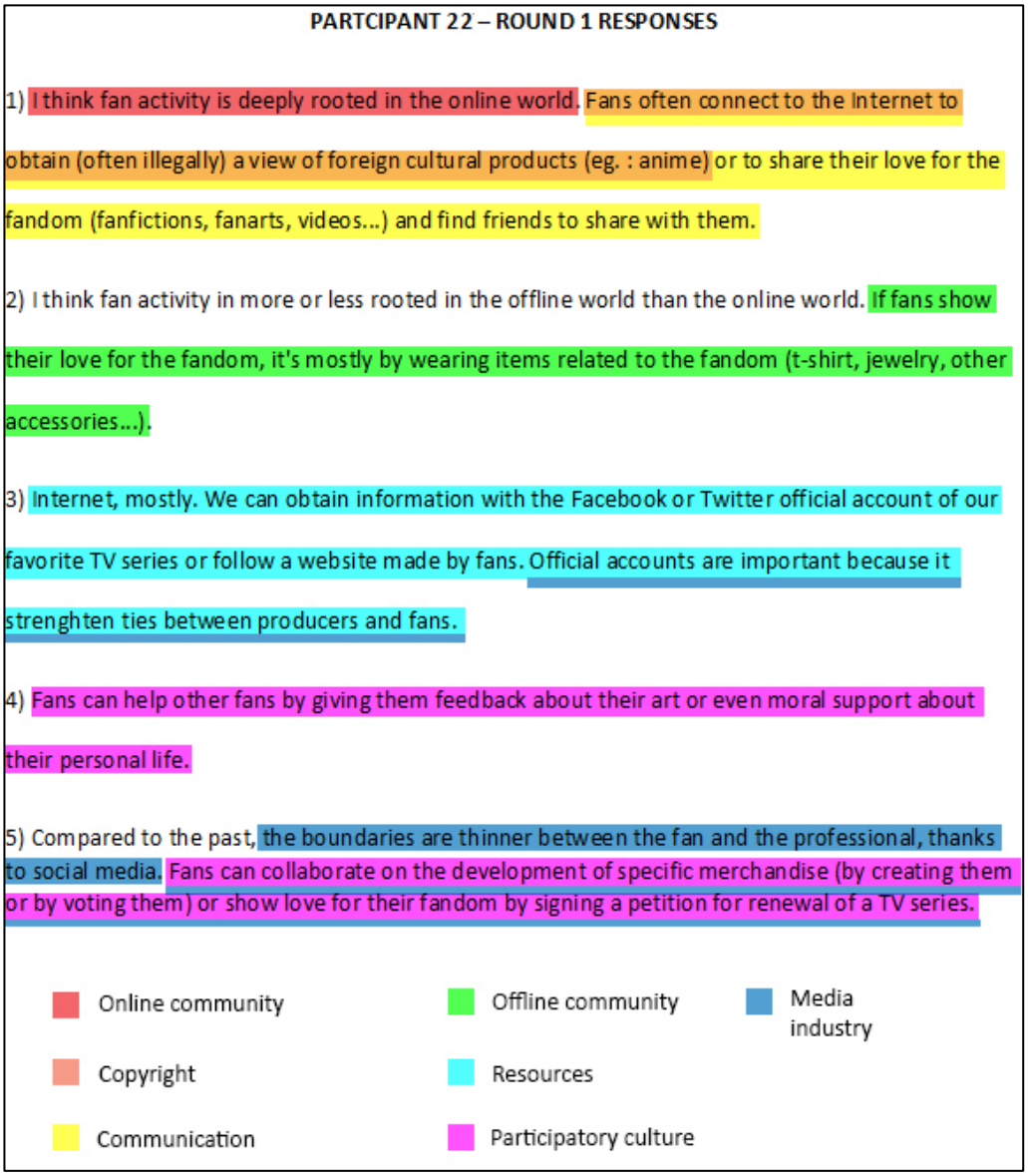


Figure 23: Participant 27's responses, showing coded sections by colour.

responses to the five questions in Round 1. The responses are coloured to reflect the codes assigned to each response in NVivo.

As can be noted, even with these short passages of text there was some overlap in the coding as multiple concepts were expressed in single sentences.

After having assigned codes to all 31 responses, two printouts were made – one of the responses coded to each theme, and one of the word frequencies for each theme. Figure 24 below depicts a portion of the responses coded to theme *Offline Community*, as it appears in NVivo. This screencap shows Participant 22's statement about offline fan communities (question 2), along with references by other participants, which are shown for contrast.

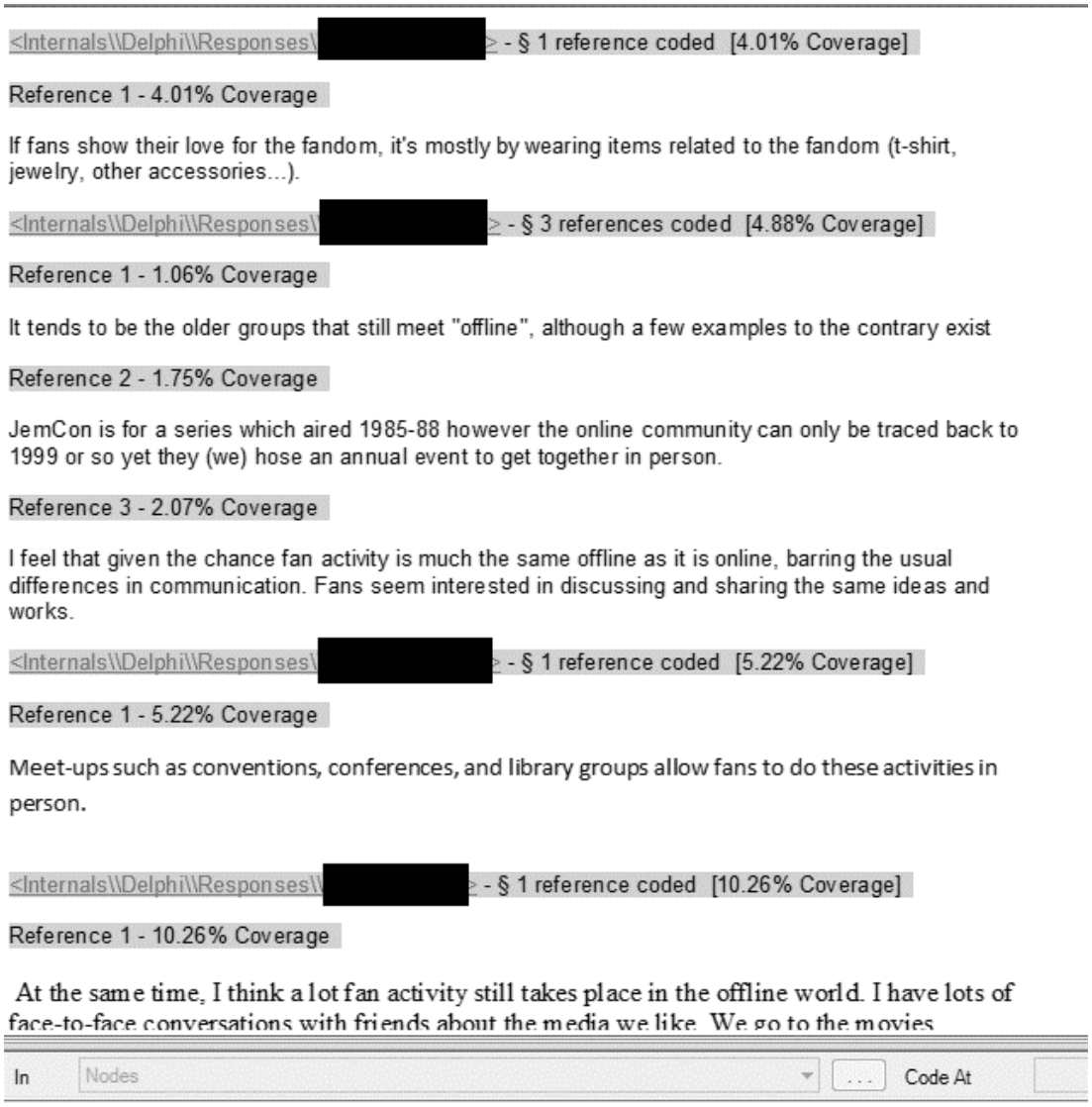


Figure 24: Screencap of various participant responses coded under 'Offline Community'.

Once printed out, each theme was scanned manually for sub-themes or recurring and/or key statements. These printouts were heavily annotated and highlighted. Key statements were typed into a Word file, and where similar statements had been made, these were merged together into a single statement.

For example, for question 2, about offline community, Participant 27 said: "If fans show their love for the fandom, it's mostly by wearing items related to the fandom". This was a prevalent theme, as other participants talked about clothing, particularly cosplay:

> Depending on the area cosplay/costuming might be another significant aggregator (Participant 4).

> …things like cosplay are better appreciated in person, as are group discussions… (Participant 24).

> Performances such as cosplay are best enjoyed offline, for instance, when fans can also interact with the cosplayers that represent their favorite characters (Participant 11).

Equally prevalent was the importance of talking about participants' fandoms offline:

> My experience with offline fandom have included little more than discussions with comic store clerks or explaining my fandom to my significant other (Participant 3).

> At best what I've done is sit down with 1-2 friends and discuss the Game of Thrones and throw a few theories around (Participant 9).

> I do discuss what is happening in the comic world with non readers (Participant 21).

Using these statements (and others), thematic statement 1.2.4 was developed; its final iteration was "Offline, fans show their fandom by what they say and wear"[50], which came under thematic unit 1.2, *Offline Community*. The final iteration of this thematic unit (i.e. after

[50] Cross-reference this with Fiske's enunciative and semiotic productivity, as explained on p. 27.

the merging and/or deletion of redundant statements, and the rephrasing of statements deemed too complex during the pilot study) is reproduced below in Table 8 to give context.

	1.2. Offline Community
1.	Offline, fans primarily engage in consumerism – buying and collecting merchandise.
2.	Fans still engage in many offline activities. It's just harder to spot.
3.	Offline activity depends on physical location and proximity to other fans.
4.	Offline, fans show their fandom by what they say and wear.
5.	There are generational differences - older fans do more offline than younger fans.
6.	Offline fan activity is more ephemeral, intense, and intimate, but it requires more money, time and effort.
7.	Fans can recruit offline friends into a fandom.
8.	Offline, fans use the post to ship over merchandise and physical fanworks.
9.	Many franchises are born offline, so consumption of these franchises will take place offline.
10.	The offline is safer because fans don't have to put their work or fan identity on public display.
11.	The offline allows first-hand experience of different cultural fan practices (e.g. food, dress etc.)

Table 14: The final list of thematic statements gathered under the thematic unit of 'Offline Community'.

Each thematic unit, with its accompanying thematic statements, then became the basis of the questionnaire for the second round. The final questionnaire is presented in Appendix J (p.401).

4.8. The second pilot

For the sake of completeness, it was initially decided to present the entire list of 155 coded statements to panel members for the second round. This was to ensure that all concepts and ideas garnered from the first round would be offered up for the participants' scrutiny. The 155 statements were prepared as a questionnaire, each under their assigned theme and overarching themed heading. The statements were presented as a 5 point Likert scale, anchored at 1= "strongly disagree", 3= "neither agree nor disagree", and 5= "strongly agree". This was in order to enable each participant to gauge their level of agreement with all concepts introduced in Round 1.

Demographic questions were also added to the questionnaire. These required the participants to give their age and gender, and to state whether they were an acafan. The aim of these additional questions was to ascertain whether any difference in demographic status would have any appreciable effect on responses given. Also added throughout the document were comment boxes. This allowed the participants to express any strong reactions they might have to the statements, any opinions they had which they felt had not been addressed by the questionnaire, or any changes of opinion they had undergone.

The questionnaire was created using both Microsoft Word 2013 and Adobe LiveCycle. This resulted in two formats: .docx and .pdf. The purpose of the two file formats was to enable participants to choose one that would best suit them.

Upon reflection, it was felt that the lengthy survey would benefit from a second pilot study to test its viability.

As with the first pilot, a convenience sample of five new participants, different from the first pilot, was selected from my own contacts. Again, each of these contacts were cult media fans. Of the five participants approached, four responded. From the responses, the following became clear:

- The questionnaire was excessively long;
- Many statements were similar and could therefore be merged;
- Some terminology was unfamiliar or unclear.

Following the respondent's concerns, the questionnaire was heavily revised. The number of statements was reduced from 155 to 88 by merging similar statements into a single statement. Although I still undertook to represent the statements in the panel members' own words as far as possible, some minor adjustments were made to clarify any terms or phrases that might be unclear. Apart from these alterations, the layout of the survey (i.e. the 5-point Likert scale; statements arranged under thematic headings) was retained.

The revised questionnaire was returned to the pilot participants; the changes were met with approval. I was therefore satisfied that the questionnaire was ready to be distributed to the panel for the second round.

4.9. Round 2

The second round questionnaire was again sent out to all 31 panel members via email. Panel members who did not complete round 1 were not contacted for round 2, and were assumed to have dropped out of the study. The email included information on how to complete the questionnaire and briefly outlined the process through which the questionnaire was generated (Appendix K, p.409). The panel members were given 5 weeks to complete and return the questionnaire. A clarification was also sent out as to the meaning of the term 'acafan' (i.e. an academic who is also a fan, who studies fans and fandom).

Panel members were invited to rate each statement according the 5-point Likert scale, as outlined above. They were also asked to fill in the demographic questions. Additionally, they were encouraged to use the optional comment boxes in order to record any ideas they felt had been unaddressed by the questionnaire, explanations for their choices, or alterations of opinion since the last round. Some participants declined to use these comment boxes, although many did.

4.9.1 Round 2 analysis

Thirty of the 31 panel members contacted for round 2 responded. Participant 27 chose not to respond simply by ignoring the emails and was not contacted further after the deadline passed. All respondents answered the demographic questions. The vast majority were female; 60% were in their 30's; and 47% self-identified as acafans. Demographic responses are outlined in Figures 25-27 below.

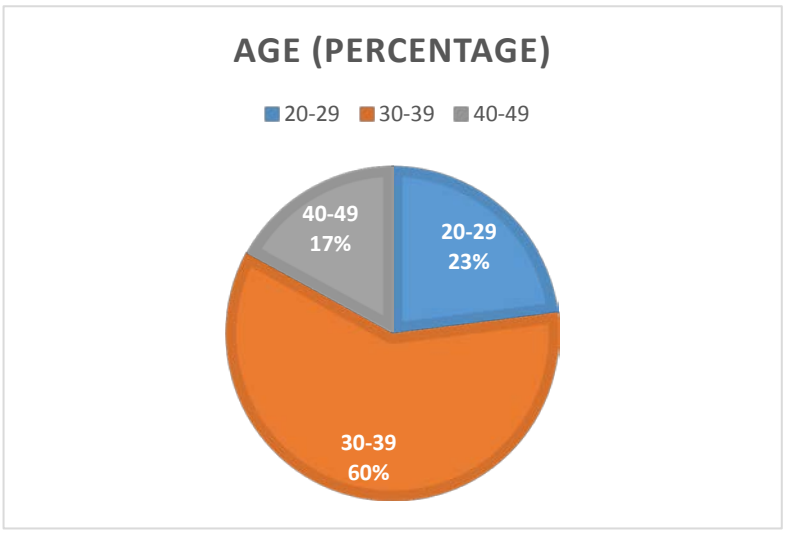


Figure 25: Age of round 2 panel members.

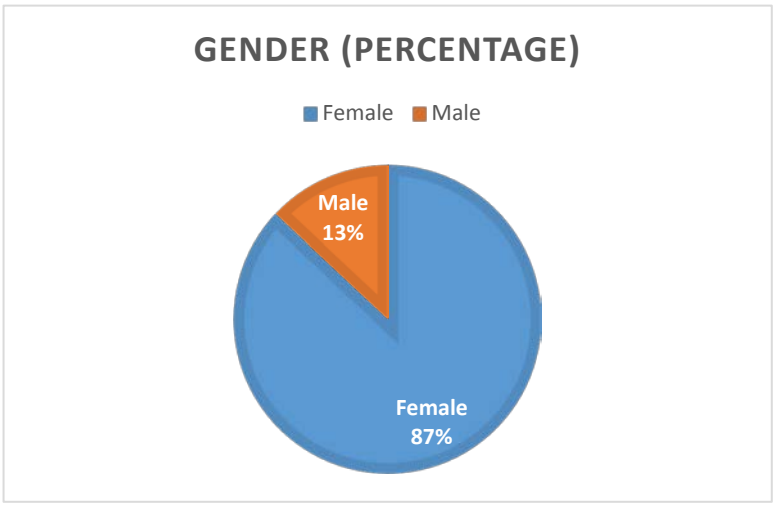


Figure 26: Gender of round 2 panel members.

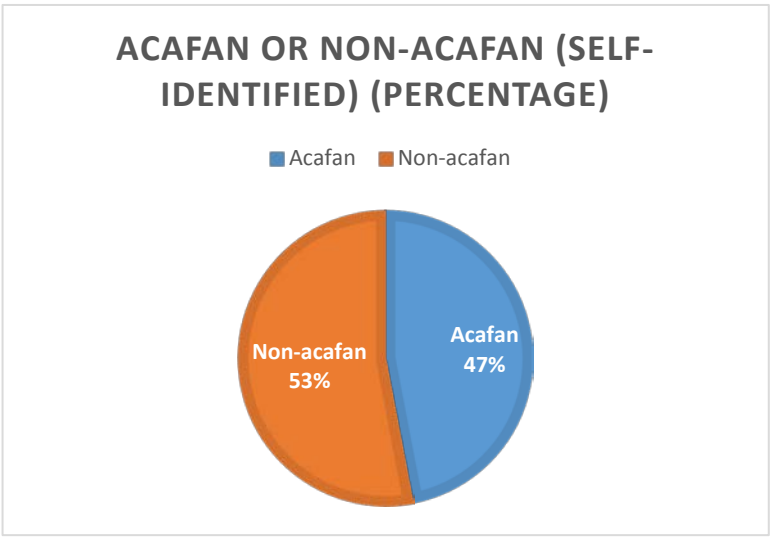


Figure 27: Percentage of self-identified acafans to non-acafans in round 2.

Most respondents returned the questionnaires in PDF form, although several encountered technical problems with both the PDF and macro-enabled Word formats, which necessitated the creation of a non-dynamic Word document that had to be filled in manually. Data was therefore carefully collated and tabulated manually. This involved meticulously going through each response and keying the opinions expressed into a table manually. Five respondents missed out questions. Two of these replied to a request to rate the questions that they missed. The remaining 3 questions that were missed were subsequently recorded as 'unmarked' and excluded from the data analysis. In two cases participants were uncertain of the meaning of a statement, and, depending on the actual meaning of the statement, indicated their agreement or disagreement with it in the available comment boxes, which was then recorded by myself.

After the data was tabulated, analysis could begin. The first task was to establish whether any consensus had been reached. This is a problematic aspect of the Delphi method, and prior guidance on the issue is rather spare. Sutherland (1975), in Linstone and Turoff's seminal edited book on the Delphi study, rather unhelpfully does not provide any means of calculating consensus,

> except to note that behavioral scientists concerned with consensus and conflict elimination have methods which are at our disposal, and the comparative effectiveness of these methods can be audited by the above procedure. Thus, the consensus-seeking process might be viewed as an action-research experiment in its own right, shifting instruments in response to empirically derived variance estimates (p.461).

This lack of a standardised method for calculating consensus may have led to an ironic lack of consensus on the matter, as von der Gracht (2012) explains:

> Unfortunately, consensus is one of the most contentious components of the Delphi method, and its measurement greatly varies. This is due to the fact that there is a controversial understanding of the term. Consensus can, for example, mean a group opinion, general agreement, or group solidarity in sentiment and belief. As a consequence, researchers have used many different measures in order to determine the level of agreement among the expert

> panel. Nevertheless, [it has been] concluded that standards for consensus in Delphi research have never been rigorously established (p.1528).

Von der Gracht's review of consensus measurement in previous Delphi studies notes that many use measures of central tendency (e.g. mode, mean, median) to calculate consensus – measures which Helmer and Rescher themselves suggested (1958, p.48). However, Von der Gracht also summarises the many caveats that come with using such measures, including inappropriate use of mean calculation for ordinal data. He also cautions against the researcher calculating consensus via subjective criteria, such as assuming consensus via personal interviews, as this is "arbitrary and scientifically questionable".

It was decided, therefore, to use a consensus measure called the Average Percent of Majority Opinions (APMO) Cut-Off Rate, as first developed by Kapoor (1987), and detailed in Cottam et al (2004). Von der Gracht describes this as a "rather specific measure for consensus". It requires the researcher to express the 'agreement', 'disagreement' and 'neutral' or 'cannot comment upon' statements as percentages. The majority is defined as any percentage that falls above 50%. Statements that meet this definition are majority opinions. The majority agreements and disagreements are added up and the sum is divided by the total opinions expressed. This total is finally multiplied by 100. The final percentage marks the APMO Cut-Off Rate (see Table 15).

This method was chosen to measure consensus as the percentage for a majority opinion is pre-defined at plus 50% (i.e. it is not an arbitrary number chosen by the researcher), and it also achieves an internal consistency by calculating a measure of consensus from within the panel members' own majority opinion.

$$\text{Average percent of majority opinions (APMO)} = \frac{\text{Majority agreements + Majority disagreements}}{\text{Total opinions expressed}} \times 100$$

Table 15: APMO Cut-Off Rate (Kapoor, 1987).

For a total of 88 statements, 2637 opinions were expressed by the participants. Of these, 1758 were majority opinions (i.e. they reached over 50% support). These figures gave an APMO cut-off rate of 67% (66.66%). Thus, 63 of the 88 statements in Round 2 reached a consensus (i.e. over 67% of participants agreed with one another on 63 of the statements). This left 25 statements that did not achieve a consensus and were thus deemed 'controversial'. A breakdown of the statements with percentages of agreement are given, with calculations, in Appendix L (p.410).

Sixteen of the panel members chose to use the optional comment boxes during Round 2 (see Appendix M, p.416). As with Round 1, some of these were mere sentences, others were considerably longer in length. Again, many of these comments expressed strong and complex opinions - about 3,500 words were generated altogether in this round. Unlike Round 1, NVivo was not used for coding or text analysis in this round. It was felt that with the smaller amount of words, it would be far more efficient to code these manually. The comments were therefore printed out, and read over carefully several times, using a highlighter and annotations to pick out the main themes. Many of these comments appeared to reiterate and/or clarify opinions expressed in Round 1. Others suggested additional sub-themes or concepts that had not been expressed in the first round. After a text analysis the following issues were identified:

1. Perceived stigma of female fans.
2. Copyright as a relatively insignificant barrier to fanworks.
3. Fans don't all necessarily share fanworks through a gift economy – many fans want to and do make money out of fanworks.
4. Not all responses to fan tags were positive.
5. Neither online or offline resources are better than the other.
6. The border between online and offline fan activities is blurred.
7. Lurkers aren't as invisible as they seem, i.e. they leave a trail in the stats they leave etc.

8. Fan activity itself depends on many variables – there is no catch-all.

Since these issues were not represented in the Round 2 questionnaire, it was felt that these should be presented to the panel as a whole to evaluate in the third round, in order to ascertain whether these were significant or controversial issues. A third Delphi questionnaire was therefore prepared, which included the controversial statements from Round 2, as well as eight additional questions based upon the new themes that emerged from that round.

4.10. Round 3

Due to participant feedback indicating trouble using the PDF and .docx questionnaires used in Round 2, it was decided to use online survey software for the last round. The software used was eSurvey Creator[51], which was free to use when registered with a university account. This software allowed easy access to the questionnaire and was easy to fill out. It also allowed for excellent tailoring of the questionnaire. This was essential due to the unusual presentation of a Delphi questionnaire (see Figure 28). In addition, and in contrast to other online survey software, such as SurveyMonkey, there was no restriction on the amount of questions that could be included in the free version.

Using eSurvey Creator, individual, tailored questionnaires were crafted for each participant. Each questionnaire consisted of the controversial statements from Round 2, plus the 8 statements given on the previous page – as with Round 2, each statement was presented against a 5-point Likert scale, anchored at 'strongly disagree' (1), 'neither agree nor disagree' (3), and 'strongly agree' (5). A final column presented the previous score given by that participant in the previous round, so as to remind panel members of their previous ratings and to allow them the chance to re-evaluate their opinions. Again, an optional comments box was added. Figure 28 (p.203) presents an example of the questionnaire, as tailored for Participant 1.

[51] https://www.esurveycreator.com

Before sending out the finished questionnaires, a test version was sent to 5 cult media fans from my own mail list. All 5 responded positively to the test, and links to the questionnaires were then sent out to the 30 panel members via email. Two weeks were given to respond to the questionnaire; two reminder emails were sent in the final week before the deadline.

4.10.1 Round 3 analysis

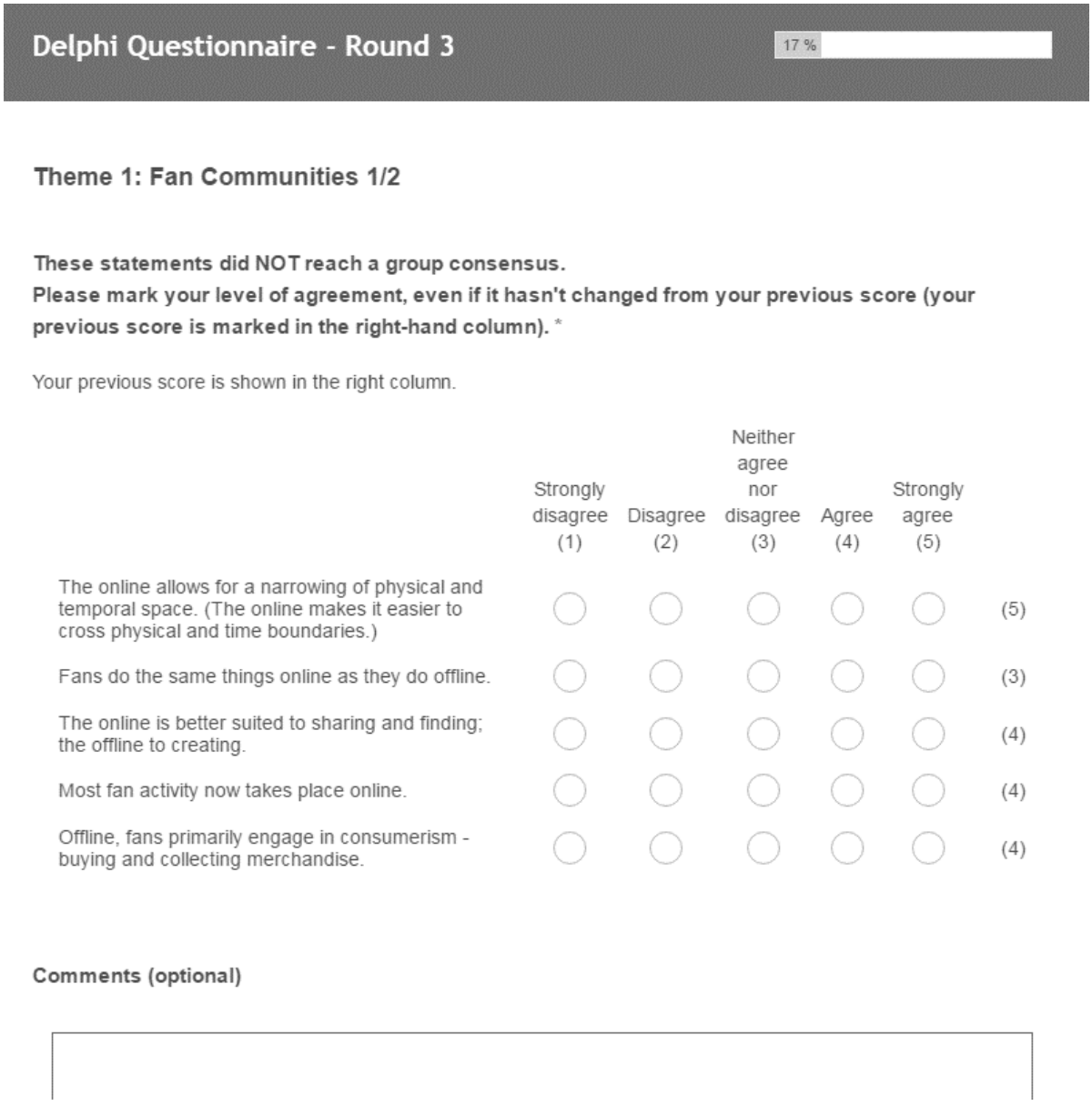
All thirty of the panel members responded, and all statements received a response. Although responses were automatically collated online by the survey software, because the questionnaire was tailored to each participant, and devised and sent out separately, responses still had to be manually tabulated and analysed. As with the second round, consensus was established using the APMO cut-off rate (Kapoor 1987), as outlined on p.200 of this thesis.

For a total of 33 statements, 990 opinions were expressed by the participants. Of these, 452 were majority opinions (i.e. they reached over 50% support). These figures gave an APMO cut-off rate of 46% (45.65%). Thus, 29 of the 33 statements in Round 3 reached a consensus (i.e. over 46% of participants agreed with one another on 33 of the statements). This left 4 statements that did not achieve a consensus and were thus deemed 'controversial'. A breakdown of the statements with percentages of agreement is given in Appendix N (p.424).

What is evident from these results is that the APMO for Round 3 was very low (i.e. the APMO cut-off point was *lower* than the cut-off point for a majority opinion, that is, 50%+). Therefore, it can be said that the rate of consensus was *considerably lower* in Round 3 as opposed to Round 2. This is not surprising considering the controversial nature of the statements presented in Round 3, statements which panel members found difficult to agree on in Round 2. It was decided, therefore, that a third designation would be used to classify statements – statements that were above the APMO cut-off rate (46%), but below the majority opinion cut-off rate (51%) would be termed 'borderline statements'. These are statements which cannot be said to *statistically* have no consensus (according to the APMO), but that

nevertheless did not reach a high level of confidence, as less than half of participants came to a consensus on them. Seven of the statements from Round 3 were, according to these parameters, considered borderline (see Appendix P, p.434).

At the conclusion of the Round 3 analysis, it became necessary to synthesise the results from all three rounds. Accounting for the total number of rounds, in total there were 96 statements presented to the judgement of the panel. Ninety-two of these reached a consensus. Of these 92 consensus statements, 7 were borderline statements and of low confidence. This left 4 statements that did not reach a consensus.



Delphi Questionnaire - Round 3

17 %

Theme 1: Fan Communities 1/2

These statements did NOT reach a group consensus.
Please mark your level of agreement, even if it hasn't changed from your previous score (your previous score is marked in the right-hand column). *

Your previous score is shown in the right column.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)	
The online allows for a narrowing of physical and temporal space. (The online makes it easier to cross physical and time boundaries.)	○	○	○	○	○	(5)
Fans do the same things online as they do offline.	○	○	○	○	○	(3)
The online is better suited to sharing and finding; the offline to creating.	○	○	○	○	○	(4)
Most fan activity now takes place online.	○	○	○	○	○	(4)
Offline, fans primarily engage in consumerism - buying and collecting merchandise.	○	○	○	○	○	(4)

Comments (optional)

Figure 28: Excerpt of Round 3 Delphi questionnaire sent to Participant 1. The right-hand-most column shows the participant's previous score from Round 2.

Whilst each statement had now been classified, this left a large number of statements (92) that had reached consensus, but gave no sense of granularity. In fact, some statements presented a very high level of confidence, whilst others very low. In order to better understand and evaluate the results, it was decided to divide the consensus statements into quartiles. Using Excel, interquartile ranges were measured for all the consensus statements, first from Round 2, and then from Round 3. Having thus assigned each statement to a quartile, these were tabulated (see Appendix O, p.429), by theme, listing statements by percentage of agreement, with those in the upper quartile (4) presented at the top, through to statements in the lower quartile (1) presented at the bottom. This arrangement gave a much clearer sense of which statements had gained a *clear* consensus, and which conversely displayed a much lower rate of confidence. Twenty of these statements were in the upper quartile, which suggested a very high rate of agreement between panel members.

Table 10 and 11 give these final results in table form. Appendices O (p.429) and P (p.434) give a more detailed presentation of these results for consensus statements, non-consensus and borderline statements respectively.

Consensus statements	Non-consensus statements	Consensus statements that are borderline
92	4	7

Table 16: Final designation of statements

Quartile 1	Quartile 2	Quartile 3	Quartile 4
23	27	22	20

Table 17: Consensus statements by quartile (1 being lowest, 4 being highest).

Thirteen of the panel members chose to use the optional comment boxes during Round 3 (see Appendix Q, p.436). As with previous rounds, several of these responses were of

considerable length (the entire corpus of this round being about 4,000 words), and conveyed strong opinions. As with Round 2, these comments were manually coded using the same process of text analysis and colour coding. Most of the comments expanded upon opinions expressed in the previous rounds; very few expressed new ideas[52]. Whilst there was no time to practically conduct a fourth round, the comments were still analysed and coded with an idea that they would either feed into the next empirical study, or to further research. Appendix Q (p.436) presents these comments.

After the third round, the Delphi study came to an end. It was closed by sending a thank you email to panel members, and offering Amazon vouchers by way of thanks. Most participants accepted the vouchers, but a few did not; one requested a donation be sent to a charity instead.

4.11. Conclusions

Despite expectations to the contrary, there was a high level of consensus amongst panel members, with 92 out of 96 statements (96%) reaching a consensus. Even disregarding the 7 statements considered borderline, and therefore of low confidence, this still leaves 89% consensus. However only 23 of the 92 consensus statements were in the upper quartile, indicating extremely high confidence. Because of the low APMO cut-off rate for Round 3, the upper quartile range is very wide for these statements (67-93%); whereas for Round 2, with a higher APMO cut-off rate, the upper quartile range is very narrow (93-100%). This would suggest that the upper quartile consensus statements in Round 2 were of *much higher confidence than those in Round 3* – unsurprising, considering Round 3 mostly comprised

[52] Three statements expressed opinions on a new theme – cross- or trans-cultural diversity in fandom. However, since this thesis is limited to Western fandom (see section 1.5), these statements were considered to be outside of the scope of this study.

controversial statements from Round 2. Table 18 lists the upper quartile consensus statements[53], detailing the percentage of agreement and round:

%	Quartile	Round	Statement
100	4	2	The internet enables increased a) reach; b) diversity; c) visibility and; d) discussion.
100	4	2	Fans are collectors of information and news about their fandom.
100	4	2	Fans can create and contribute to amateur information resources (e.g. wikis).
100	4	2	New technologies have changed how we create, edit and distribute media.
100	4	2	Fans support one another through mental, practical and physical problems.
96	4	2	Significant and meaningful relationships can be formed online.
96	4	2	Due to the speed and easiness of communication, the internet has become the premier medium for fan communication.
96	4	2	Fans collect information for other fans in the form of creating rec lists, link lists, wikis, tutorials, guides, etc.
94	4	2	Franchise producers acknowledge fans by incorporating Easter eggs and fan service into their products.
94	4	2	Fans collaborate in large-scale projects as well as small-scale ones.
94	4	2	Other fans are an important discovery tool and source of information.
94	4	2	Certain fans act as information sources or gatekeepers for the wider fan community.
94	4	2	Fans can raise awareness of issues through social media campaigns and other forms of activism.
93	4	3	The online allows for a narrowing of physical and temporal space. (The online makes it easier to cross physical and time boundaries.)
90	4	3	Despite copyright, fanworks are created and traded without many boundaries.
90	4	3	Using both online and offline resources together and according to my needs works best.
83	4	3	A lot of what we can say about fans depends on the fandom they belong to, the producers/creators of their fandom, and the individual personality of the fan.
77	4	3	Lurkers can be visible through the 'hits' they leave - number of visits, kudos, likes, favourites, reblogs, retweets, etc.
73	4	3	Male fans rarely get the same degree of scrutiny and mockery that female fans have to face.
70	4	3	The source of a fandom is the most important resource.

Table 18: Delphi upper quartile consensus statements.

[53] All these statements showed consensus through *agreement*, rather than disagreement, i.e. most panel members agreed with the statements rather than disagreed with them.

In order to better understand these results, these statements were further broken down into themes, as depicted in Figure 29. This showed that the *majority* of consensus statements (30%) were related to the information behaviour of fans, followed by those related to online fan communities and activities (15%)[54]. Therefore, it can be inferred that the panel members agreed most on statements related to fan information behaviour. These statements are as follows:

1. Fans are collectors of information and news about their fandom.
2. Fans can create and contribute to amateur information resources (e.g. wikis).
3. Fans collect information for other fans in the form of creating rec lists, link lists, wikis, tutorials, guides, etc.
4. Certain fans act as information sources or gatekeepers for the wider fan community.
5. Fans collaborate in large-scale projects as well as small-scale ones.
6. Other fans are an important discovery tool and source of information.

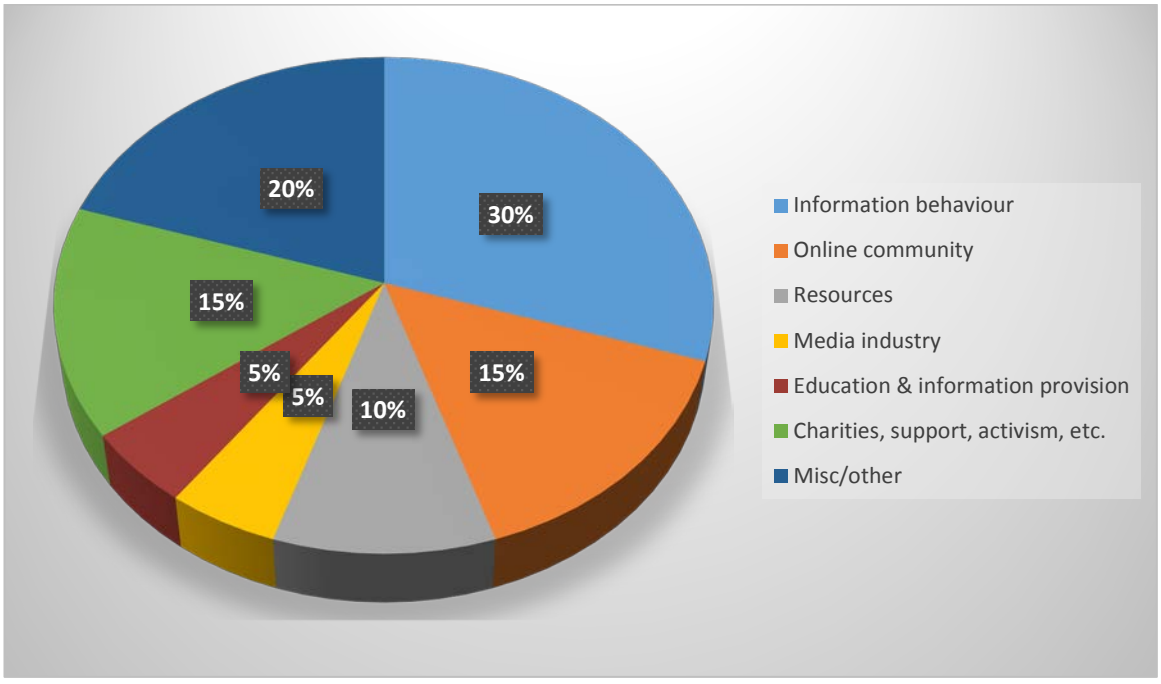


Figure 29: Upper quartile consensus statements by theme.

[54] The second-largest theme is actually Misc/other, although this theme is actually comprised of single-themes statements that do not fit into the other categories.

From these statements, one can see that there is a focus on the role of other fans, or groups of fans, as sources, providers and gatekeepers of fan information. This highlights the collaborative nature of information resource creation and dissemination, and the favouring of informal channels of news and information.

By contrast, only four of the statements did not reach a consensus – that is, few panel members could agree on their opinions on these statements. These statements fell under the themes of offline community and the media industry; only one of these statements came from the extra questions from Round 3, and is to do with fan money-making and entrepreneurship. These statements are as follows:

%	Statement
43	*Offline, fans primarily engage in consumerism - buying and collecting merchandise.*
37	*Offline fan activity is more ephemeral, intense, and intimate.*
37	*Fans' influence on producers is limited mainly to their purchasing power.*
33	Making money is important to fans, and they're finding more ways to make it.

Table 19: Delphi non-consensus statements.

Statements in italics indicate consensus through disagreement with the statements, rather than through agreement.

From looking at these statements, it can be seen that the most contentious statement (i.e. the statement with the lowest percentage of consensus, at 33%) was the statement pertaining to fans making money. Thus it can be assumed that the most controversial concept from the Delphi study was the idea of fans making money from the sale of fanworks and other fan-related artefacts. It is also worth noting that the most prevalent issue discussed in the Round 3 comments is money-making in fandom.

Several points are clear from the Delphi study. Despite a general assumption that fandom is rife with conflict and contention (e.g. Bacon-Smith 1992), this study would seem to suggest that there is far more consensus amongst fans regarding their practices than might be supposed. Several themes and concepts put forward by the study's participants exhibited a

high level of confidence from those same participants, due to their appearance in the upper quartile of consensus statements. These themes are as follows: fan information behaviour, online community and activities, information resources, the media industry, information provision, and community support (both between individual fans, fans as a whole, and for outside causes). Participant commentary suggested a strong conviction on several points. First, participants were positive about the changes technology and the internet had achieved in bringing together fans and creating a platform for community growth, the publishing of fanworks, and the sharing of fan-related news. Related to this was a strong agreement that the internet was no barrier to creating lasting and meaningful relationships with other fans. However, comments also suggested that there was a blurring of the boundaries between online and offline behaviour: participants found that whilst some activities were exclusive to either one domain or the other (e.g. Tumblr memes online; cosplay offline), the relationship fans have with the online and offline is far more complex than a straight demarcation of activities between the two. Fans seem to take a far more symbiotic approach to the two, tailoring their activities to each domain without necessarily keeping one exclusive of the other. In fact, many fan activities progress seamlessly from one domain to the other (e.g. fans will cosplay offline, and post and tag photos of their cosplay to share with other fans on Tumblr). Therefore, it would be misleading to suggest that fan activities can be easily classified under either online or offline – there appears to be a large degree of interdependence between the two, and fans do not seem to regard their actions as being exclusive to one or the other, but part of a continuum.

Another concept with a high level of agreement was the degree of agency that fans might have in relation to the media industry and the creators of their fandoms. Participants seemed to be aware that, whilst producers are cognisant of the importance of pleasing fans and courting their opinion, the actual power fans wield is limited – whilst in most fandoms (crucially *not all*) there is some sense of control over creators (via activities such as online polls, creator Q&A's and competitions), in the end producers and creators will always have the final

say. Fans of some franchises may feel this more than others – for example, Participant 9 felt that *Teen Wolf* fans had been especially ill-treated by producers of the show, whilst creators of *Hannibal* had been supportive of their fans. On a related tangent, it became clear through participant comments that much of fan experience is dependent on the particular *fandom(s)* that that fan might belong to, and, as suggested in the literature review, as fandom is not homogeneous, fan experience itself is also not homogeneous. This does not mean, however, that there are not *generalised fan experiences* that can be agreed upon, which is in fact the object of this Delphi study.

It is therefore of great interest (considering the subject of this thesis, i.e. the information behaviour of fans), that the majority of statements in which the highest confidence was placed by participants related precisely to fan information behaviour and information related issues. As stated above, it seems that participants were in agreement on the role other fans had to play in the information chain – that is, in the creation, organisation and dissemination of information *and* fanworks. There was also a strong belief in the concept that fans are not merely followers of a franchise, but also collectors of information, news and cultural artefacts to do with that franchise. This is not merely restricted to officially-created or endorsed materials, but also unofficial or transformative materials, such as fanart or fanfiction. Fans tend to be generous in the sharing of these materials, collating and sharing them via fan-created wikis, Tumblrs, guides, tutorials, reclists, etc. This is reflected in a strong agreement that other fans are an important source of fan information, and that some act as gatekeepers for the rest of the community. This would suggest that much of the information behaviour of fans is collaborative, informal and generous. As Participant 11 commented: “being in fandom means being in a knowledge space.”

Also related to information behaviour in this context, a special mention should be made for fantagging, which participants also commented on in both round 2 and 3. It appeared that some fans were active users of fan tags for organising their work, particularly on

Tumblr, and found it useful in both managing, sharing and finding materials. Other participants, however, were of the opinion that tagging was unreliable and was dependent on the tagging abilities of the individual tagger. However, whilst these comments were interesting, too few of the participants specifically mentioned fantagging for it to be significantly represented in the Delphi statements – however, its use would be worth further investigation.

Turning now to the non-consensus statements, it seemed that there was some controversy as regards offline activity – this is closely tied to the consensus statements on online activity mentioned above. Participants were not convinced that offline activities could be so uniformly categorised as primarily being a site of consumerism, or that it induced more intense and ephemeral fan experiences. They pointed out that consumption did not only indicate monetary activities, but also the consumption of knowledge; and likewise, as mentioned above, that these activities were not exclusive to either the offline or the online. Participants also noted that online experiences could be just as intense and charged as offline (hence events such as flame wars).

The most contentious statement was that making money was important to fans, and that there were more opportunities for fans to make money. As well as participants not being able to agree on this point, it was also the most mentioned issue in the Round 3 comments (see Appendix Q, p.436). This indicates the controversial nature of the statement. Some participants felt that making money from fanworks was a step to a professional career; others felt that it depended on the fanwork (e.g. fanart might sell well, fanfiction would not). Some felt that fans that make money are in a minority and most of fandom works on a gift economy; others thought that wanting to make money and feel that their work is worth something is simply a part of human nature. One participant felt that selling fanworks took away the 'personal' element from creating fanworks. However, whilst most fans held differing opinions on this issue, they did seem to agree that, in the creation of fanworks – whether for sale or not

– fans generally held an ambivalent stance towards copyright, and that there were few boundaries to sharing their works.

Since fan money-making was such a contentious issue amongst the Delphi panel members, it was felt that this would be an appropriate issue for further investigation.

Below is a table summarising the Delphi study findings, with reference to the objectives outlined in section 4.1. These findings comprise the highest confidence (quartile 4) consensus statements, controversial statements, and other findings that can be surmised from the Delphi.

Objective	Findings
1. To delineate the online activities of fans and thus narrow down to what extent the information activities of fans are intrinsic to fans themselves (whether online or offline)	• There is a blurring of online and offline fan activity. • The internet enables increased reach, diversity, visibility and discussion. • Due to the speed and easiness of communication, the internet has become the premier medium for fan communication. • Fans can create and contribute to amateur information resources (e.g. wikis). • New technologies have changed how we create, edit and distribute media. • Lurkers can be visible through the 'hits' they leave - number of visits, kudos, likes, favourites, reblogs, retweets, etc.
2. To delineate the offline activities of fans.	• There is a blurring of online and offline fan activity. • Fans are divided on whether fans primarily engage in consumerism offline. • Offline fan activity is not necessarily more ephemeral, intense, and intimate.
3. To ascertain the information behaviour and resources of fans.	• Fans are collectors of information and news about their fandom. • Fans collect information for other fans in the form of creating rec lists, link lists, wikis, tutorials, guides, etc. • Other fans are an important discovery tool and source of information. • Certain fans act as information sources or gatekeepers for the wider fan community. • The source of a fandom is the most important resource. • Fans use a wide variety of information resources, both analogue and digital (see Appendix F, p.345, for a list of these resources). • Fans are divided on the usefulness of tagging.

4. To ascertain the *participatory* aspects of fan culture, especially with regards to mentorship, support and collaboration.	• Fans support one another through mental, practical and physical problems. • Fans collaborate in small- and large-scale projects. • Significant and meaningful relationships can be formed online. • Fans can raise awareness of issues through social media campaigns and other forms of activism. • Fans' influence on producers is not only limited mainly to their purchasing power. • Franchise producers acknowledge fans by incorporating Easter eggs and fan service into their products.
5. To ascertain fans' attitude towards the 'pro-am' activities of fans.	• Despite copyright, fanworks are created and traded without many boundaries. • Fans cannot agree on whether making money is important to fans, and whether they're finding more ways to make it.

Table 20: Summary of Delphi findings, linked to thesis objectives.

To summarise, in the next stage of the empirical study, the following areas will be investigated:

AREAS OF SPECIFIC INVESTIGATION

1. How do fans act as resource collectors, sharers and communicators?
2. How do fans act as information providers, intermediaries and gatekeepers?
3. How do fans make money from their fandoms?

Objectives of thesis	Impact areas	Delphi study findings	Areas for specific investigation	Case study aims
1. To better understand the information behaviour of a unique group of people and therefore better plan information services and/or architectures.	**1.** Library and information professions	• There is a blurring of online and offline fan activity. • Due to the speed and easiness of communication, the internet has become the premier medium for fan communication. • Fans can create and contribute to amateur information resources (e.g. wikis). • New technologies have changed how we create, edit and distribute media. • Lurkers can be visible through the 'hits' they leave - number of visits, kudos, likes, favourites, reblogs, retweets, etc.	• How do fans act as resource collectors, sharers and communicators?	**1.** Tags as information and fanwork organisation and sharing. **2.** Tags as fan communication.
2. To investigate fanwork collections, their place as cultural products, and how fans create, disseminate, promote, access and preserve them.	**1.** Library and information professions	• Fans are collectors of information and news about their fandom. • Fans collect information for other fans in the form of creating rec lists, link lists, wikis, tutorials, guides, etc. • Other fans are an important discovery tool and source of information. • Certain fans act as information sources or gatekeepers for the wider fan community. • The source of a fandom is the most important resource. • Fans use a wide variety of information resources, both analogue and digital. • Fans are divided on the usefulness of tagging.	• How do fans act as resource collectors, sharers and communicators? • How do fans act as information gatekeepers?	**1.** Tags as information and fanwork organisation and sharing. **2.** Gatekeeping
3. To explore whether fan information behaviour can be generalised to, and whether it can inform other domains, such as the publishing and media industries, education, and copyright law.	**1.** Copyright **2.** Publishing **3.** Media industry **4.** Education	• Fans support one another through mental, practical and physical problems. • Fans collaborate in both small- and large-scale projects. • Significant and meaningful relationships can be formed online. • Fans can raise awareness of issues through social media campaigns and other forms of activism. • Fans' influence on producers is not only limited mainly to their purchasing power. • Franchise producers acknowledge fans by incorporating Easter eggs and fan service into their products. • Despite copyright, fanworks are created and traded without many boundaries. • Fans cannot agree on whether making money is important to fans, and whether they're finding more ways to make it.	• How do fans make money from their fandoms?	**1.** Money-making

Table 21: Summary of Delphi findings, linked to thesis objectives, impact areas and case study aims.

5. PART FIVE – Case studies

Considering the outcomes of the Delphi study, it was decided to focus on three points for the next stage of empirical research, namely the case studies. These are:

1. Fans as resource collectors, sharers and communicators;
2. Fans as information providers, intermediaries and gatekeepers, and;
3. Fans as money-makers.

The first two points were areas of high consensus during the Delphi study, and were deemed worthy of further investigation with regards to determining the information behaviour of fans, and thus satisfying objective 1 and 2 of the thesis (see p.9). The third point – fans as money-makers – was the most controversial concept in the Delphi study, and therefore also deserving of further investigation. This point will also help achieve objective 3 of the thesis (see p.9). There were, of course, other points of high consensus (see the Table 18 on p.206), but not all could be chosen for study as the purpose of the case studies was to look at certain aspects of fan information behaviour in depth. Exploring all 20 of the high consensus Delphi statements would not have been practicable in this case, so a decision had to be made as to which were most worthwhile. The first two were chosen as they dealt directly with aspects of information behaviour. The last was chosen due to its significant lack of consensus among participants.

By extension these objectives will test the model developed from the literature review (see Figure 14, p.113), particularly these aspects:

- Does the model adequately represent how fans collect and communicate information?
- Does it account for information gatekeeping behaviour?
- Does it reflect money-making and entrepreneurship?

It was decided to explore these areas through the medium of fan-tagging on three different online platforms used by fans – Tumblr, Archive of Our Own (AO3) and Etsy. The rationale for this decision is discussed in detail in section 3.3.3.2. Fan-tagging is essentially synonymous with tagging, but is used to denote tagging practices in the context of fan activities. It was decided to investigate fan-tags as this was an area of some contention in the Delphi study that nevertheless was only mentioned in passing and that it was felt warranted further investigation. The three online platforms were chosen for different reasons. Firstly, Tumblr is a visually-based social media platform that is heavily used by fans to share mostly images, but also text in the form of fiction, roleplaying, and conversation. Its popularity and wide usage amongst fans made it an excellent choice for exploring point 1 above. AO3 is a fanfiction repository with a unique tagging system which might be considered a 'curated folksonomy' (Bullard 2014). Tags generated by users go through a process called 'tag wrangling', wherein volunteers called 'tag wranglers' work behind the scenes to link user-generated tags with synonymous meanings. This activity might be considered a form of information gatekeeping, which makes AO3 an appropriate site for exploring point 2[55]. Lastly, Etsy is an online marketplace for small or home businesses, and there is a strong community of fanwork-sellers based there, which makes it appropriate for the investigation of point 3.

Social media data analysis, specifically tag analysis, was used in the case studies – a detailed summary of this method can be found in section 3.3.3.2. This involved taking a base tag (in this case 'Romy'), and scraping its recent usage on each of the three sites to gather a dataset of co-occurring tags. The tags were then coded manually using the categories developed by Marlow, Naaman, boyd et al (2006) and Golder and Huberman (2006), and simplified by Smith (2008a) (see Table 22). A comparison of the three resulting datasets and

[55] For more on social media and social curation online, Saxton and Ghosh (2016) give an interesting account of information gatekeeping by pinners on Pinterest, saying: "the pinner is taking a more long-term approach in aiming to become seen as a useful information source. The effect, if successful, is that the pinner will acquire substantial social media-based reputational capital, or what we may call *social media capital* […] and that this influential social position will ultimately be converted into increased brand equity and financial gain" [n.p.].

their categories was then undertaken, with the aim of explicating differing usage patterns and motivations for fan-tagging. In order to support and/or test the results, supplementary interviews will be conducted with 6 of the most popular users of the 'Romy' tag – 2 from each site.

Tag type	Examples
Descriptive	css, webdesign, ajax, Minnesota, drama, gardening, zen, microfinance, music, halo3, networks, sushi, hibiscus
Resource	blog, book, video, photo
Ownership/Source	nytimes, genesmith (author), newriders
Opinion	cool, funny, *****, lame, beautiful, crap, defective by design
Self-reference	mystuff, mine, me
Task Organizing	toread, todo, work
Play and Performance	squaredcircle, seenlive, aka vogon poetry

Table 22: Tag types (Smith 2008a).

5.1. Objectives of the case studies

The objectives of the case studies are: a) to satisfy the objectives of the thesis, as outlined on p.9 in section 1.4.; b) to test the conclusions of the Delphi study. The relationship between the thesis and case study objectives are depicted in the table below:

Case study objectives	Thesis objectives
1. To investigate the ways in which fans use tags to organise and share fanworks and information online.	**1.** To gain more understanding of the information behaviour of a unique group of people, and therefore to improve planning for information services and/or architectures. **2.** To investigate fanwork collections, their place as cultural products, and how fans create, disseminate, promote, organise, access and preserve them.
2. To investigate the ways in which fans use tags to communicate with one another online.	**1.** To gain more understanding of the information behaviour of a unique group of people, and therefore to improve planning for information services and/or architectures. **2.** To investigate fanwork collections, their place as cultural products, and how fans create, disseminate, promote, organise, access and preserve them.

3. To investigate how fans act as gatekeepers online.	**1.** To gain more understanding of the information behaviour of a unique group of people, and therefore to improve planning for information services and/or architectures. **2.** To investigate fanwork collections, their place as cultural products, and how fans create, disseminate, promote, organise, access and preserve them.
4. To investigate the practices and attitudes of fans who sell fanworks online.	**1.** To gain more understanding of the information behaviour of a unique group of people, and therefore to improve planning for information services and/or architectures. **3.** To explore whether fan information behaviour can be generalised to, and whether it can inform, other domains, including LIS, the publishing and media industries, education, and copyright.

More specifically, the case studies will address the following points:

- Understanding fan-tagging practices may help to improve information architectures used in fan contexts;
- Fan-tagging practices will give insight into how fans share, disseminate, promote and organise their work;
- Investigating tag wranglers on AO3 may tell us if and how fans act as information gatekeepers;
- Investigating fan sellers on Etsy may have wider implications for domains outside of LIS, i.e. the media industry, copyright law, etc.

5.2. Scope and limitations

The three case studies focus on 3 online platforms – Tumblr, Archive of Our Own (AO3), and Etsy. All hold very different functions, but are widely used by fans. Tumblr is an image-based social media site; AO3 is a fanfiction repository; Etsy is a marketplace for small businesses primarily selling handmade, vintage, or arts and crafts goods. Each of these sites

are described in more detail in their respective sections below. These sites were specifically chosen in order to investigate and address the objectives outlined above.

Specifically, all three sites will be used to test objectives 1 and 5. Tumblr will be used to test objective 2; AO3 objective 3; and Etsy objective 4. It is possible that there will be overlaps between the respective sites and their objectives, that is, data from one site may inform the understanding of another objective – no pairing is intended to be absolutely exclusive.

The case studies focus on one particular fandom, or sub-fandom, specifically called 'Romy'. Romy fans follow the 'ship', or relationship, between two characters called Rogue and Gambit, who are mutant superheroes from Marvel Universe's *X-Men* franchise. The term 'Romy' itself is a portmanteau of the two character's names, i.e. Rogue + Remy = 'Romy'. Both this term and its synonyms are widely used in online contexts to tag fanworks related to these two characters. The reason for choosing this particular fandom as the focus of the case studies is twofold. Firstly, it is a relatively small fandom and easier to investigate than more popular ones such as *Supernatural* and *Sherlock.* Secondly, fan nomenclature tends to be rather impervious and difficult for outsiders to understand. Some Marvel Universe-specific fan terms include: 'ironshield' (to denote a pairing between the characters Iron Man and Captain America); 'fem!clint' (to denote a gender-swapped Hawkeye character); and 'cuckoocest' (to denote incest between the Stepford Cuckoos characters). Many Marvel tags are references to obscure characters, story arcs, plot elements and locations that are also inscrutable to outsiders. In order to analyse the 'Romy' tag and all its co-occurring tags, therefore, would require either substantial knowledge of the Marvel Universe, or substantial research in the area to familiarise oneself with it. As I have been a long-time fan of the Marvel Universe and the Romy fandom in particular, an analysis of the 'Romy' tag and its synonyms was chosen for the case studies, as the requisite subject expertise would greatly reduce the time needed researching tag meanings, and also improve coding accuracy.

There are, of course, limitations to these case studies. We have already seen how Case (2012) has pointed to the fact that case studies can only show a snapshot in time, and this is especially pertinent in the case of tagging, where tags may reflect passing trends, fads, or events. The use of #GE2015 on Twitter is a case in point, where it was used extensively during the UK general election of 2015, but sees little current usage. Similar spikes may exist in fan-tagging patterns – such examples may include #MCMLDN16, which was used on social media to tag the 2016 iterations of the popular bi-annual MCM comic expo in London. A limitation that is closely related to this is the fact that since the case studies focus solely on the Romy fandom, results should not necessarily be generalised to the wider fan community.

Secondly, manually coding tags is of course very subjective and there are many instances where a tag can likely fit into more than one category. For example, the term 'X-Men' may refer to the Marvel superhero team, or it may refer to the fandom itself. To put this in simpler terms, using Smith's (2008a) tag categories (see Table 22, p.217), the term 'my art' might refer to a resource, or it might be self-reference. In such cases, it is necessary for the researcher to make an informed judgement as to the category that best describes the tag, which can naturally leave the potential for erroneous judgement. Such biases can be mitigated using coding teams, but unfortunately the limited time, resources and expertise available for this study did not allow for this.

The last limitation deals with that of expertise, in that researcher does not have a background in programming, data visualisation or network science. This, however, is a minor limitation, as the recent growth of network analysis programmes and tools enables the processing of data and the automatic rendering of a variety of network graphs, without requiring the user to have coding expertise. This is important as network science itself has spread "to less computational and algorithmically focused areas", and "the need for non-

programmatic interfaces" has grown[56] (Smith et al 2009, pp.255-256). As such, these programmes are now widely used by network analysis scholars, due to the fact that they provide flexibility, streamlined use, "graphical interfaces, rich libraries of metrics, and do not require coding or command line execution of features" (Smith et al 2009, p.256).

5.3. Ethics

As with the Delphi, the study was approved by the City, University of London ethics committee. A detailed, committee-approved information sheet was sent to all potential interview participants along with a formal interview invitation. Also attached was a committee-approved consent form, which participants were required to fill out and return (digitally or physically) before undertaking the study (see Appendices R, p.444, and S, p.445, for copies). A more in-depth account of the ethical concerns in this study, particularly with web crawling, can be found in section 3.4.1.

5.4. Materials & equipment

The comparative case study was split into two parts. The first was the social media data analysis section, which was the larger and more labour-intensive of the two sections. The second was the interview section.

For the first section, several programmes were used to aid in the social media data analysis. Tags were scraped from all three sites using different methods:

- **Tumblr**: An open source Python script, get_tagstats[57], was used to access the Tumblr API and scrape tags used on the site. This necessitated the installation of Python 2 in order to run the script. A Tumblr account was needed to use the API.

[56] Similar trends include the growth over the past decade of website-builders, that use templates and do not require the user to have knowledge of HTML.
[57] Developed by Destination Toast, and available at https://github.com/annathecrow/toasty_tools/blob/master/_original/get_tagstats.py. The script was personally tweaked by the developer at my request, during email communication. At the time of writing the updated version is not available for download.

- **AO3**: The free web crawler, SocSciBot[58], developed by Mike Thelwall and the Statistical Cybermetrics Research Group at the University of Wolverhampton, was used to scrape tags. Pajek, an open source programme for analysing and visualising networks, was used to a render the resulting dataset in a format that could be imported into NodeXL.
- **Etsy:** A free online tool, EtsyRank[59], was used to scrape tags from Etsy. Since EtsyRank is connected to the Etsy API, an Etsy account is needed to use it.

All resulting datasets were cleaned in Microsoft Excel before being imported into NodeXL[60], a network analysis tool that plugs into Excel. In order to have access to the full range of functions, a subscription was paid to obtain the professional version of the programme. Other network analysis programmes were also tried, these being Pajek and Gephi. However, NodeXL was chosen as its interface was the most intuitive to use, and it had higher interoperability with different file formats. The community was also supportive and responsive to troubleshooting. Smith, Shneiderman, Milic-Frayling et al (2009) give an excellent overview of NodeXL's functions, calling it "an extendible network analysis toolkit that encourages interactive overview, discovery and exploration through 'direct' data manipulation, graphing and visualization", which has "a special focus on social media networks" (p.256). In addition, NodeXL has been used in recent LIS research, particularly in the analysis of library Twitter accounts. This research has largely focused on understanding a library account's network of followers, in order to best gauge outreach, marketing and promotion policies, and also to identify the profile and activities of the account's most influential followers (see, for example, Yep, Brown, Fagliorone and Shulman 2017; Shulman, Yep and Tomé 2015; Ewbank 2015; Yep and Shulman 2014). These studies demonstrate that

[58] http://socscibot.wlv.ac.uk/
[59] https://etsyrank.com/
[60] The professional version can be downloaded at http://www.smrfoundation.org/nodexl/. The basic version is available at https://nodexl.codeplex.com/

there is a growing interest in and recognition of the importance of social media network analysis in understanding library and information users within social media networks.

Once the network data had been analysed in NodeXL, additional coding (such as calculated means, averages and quartiles) and data visualising (such as graphs) were performed in Excel.

The second section of the study – the interviews – was conducted via email. The interview process largely follows that of the Delphi study (see section 4.6). The textual data from the interviews were imported into NVivo and coded into themes. As with the Delphi, NVivo allowed for detailed and in-depth analysis of the textual resources.

5.5. The sites

A brief description of the tagging systems used in each of the 3 sites investigated in these case studies is given here, in order to better facilitate the reader's understanding of how these systems affect the social media data analysis. Previous relevant research on these sites will also be summarised in this section for context and a brief overview on the current state of scholarship.

5.5.1. Tumblr

Tumblr uses a hybrid tagging system. Firstly, it is a self-tagging system, i.e. a system where a user can only tag the resources they have created (Zollers 2007). Secondly, it incorporates an automanual function, where Tumblr itself will suggest recommended tags based upon the first few characters typed in, previous tags the tagger has used, and the most popular tags used on the site (Warner 2011; Smith 2008b). Lastly, the site allows the reblogging of another user's resources, and when reblogging, a user has the option of

retagging the resource with their own terms. Of note is the fact that only the first 20 tags are indexed by the site (Unwrapping Tumblr 2014; 2013)[61].

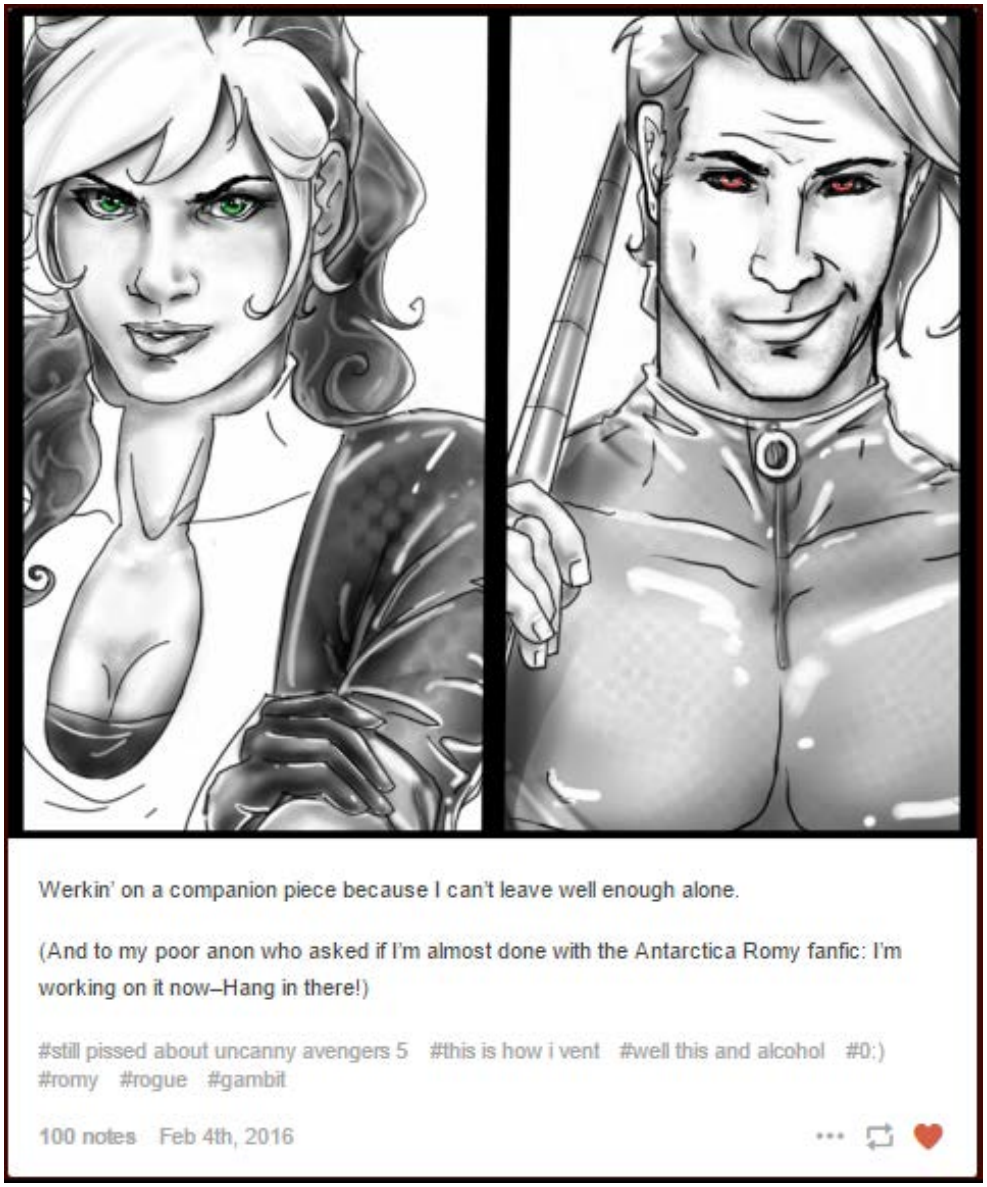


Figure 30: Tumblr post by Participant B, 4th Feb 2016 (retrieved 24 December 2016).

Figure 30 shows a screencap of a Tumblr post by case study Participant B. The resource in this picture is an image (fanart) created by Participant B of the characters Rogue

[61] At the time of this research, received wisdom among Tumblr users was that only the first 5 tags were indexed by the site. This was indeed the case; however, after the empirical work, it was discovered that this was no longer so, and the indexing system had been updated, apparently sometime in October 2013. Since then, Tumblr will index up to 20 tags on original posts and reblogs, although tag pages (e.g. https://***nameofblog***.tumblr.com/tagged/***nameoftag***) still only appear to rely on the first 5 tags for retrieval (Unwrapping Tumblr 2014).

and Gambit. Users may also add descriptions to their post; here Participant B has added a short caption to her artwork, followed, in parentheses, by a communique to another user. Below the description can be seen the tags. These follow the hashtag format popularised by Twitter; however, unlike Twitter, spaces are allowed between words; there are no restrictions to formatting (e.g. numbers and special characters are allowed), nor are there any restrictions on the amount of tags that can be used. Descriptive tagging is used ("#romy", "#rogue", "#gambit"); but another form of tagging, unique to Tumblr, is also used. Three tags are used to express the affective impressions of the tagger, whilst also enriching the description of the resource itself ("#still pissed about uncanny avengers 5", "#this is how i vent", "#well this and alcohol"). These three tags are separated into phrases, but together form a coherent sentence or thought. Not only do they express affect, but they also communicate Participant B's fan identity (i.e. her disappointment with a certain comic book and its depictions of her favourite characters) to other fans on the site. The final tag used in this post is an emoji ("#0:)"), which represents a smiley face with a halo above it, and lends a playful emphasis to Participant B's affective tags.

Attu and Terras (2017) give an excellent summary of the academic research that has been done on Tumblr thus far. Whilst this currently appears to be a small body of research, interest in the site has been steadily growing in social media research. Attu and Terras' overview show that "blogging, education, libraries, identity, and fandom are the most frequent topics in Tumblr-focused research" (2017, p.544). Looking at the literature from the standpoint of Williams et al's (2013) four main aspects of microblogging research (p.389) most papers focused on Concept, and the fewest focused on Technology, although most research combined aspects, of which Concept and Message were most constantly paired. What is clear, however, from Attu and Terras' paper, is that so far there does not seem to be any investigation done into Tumblr tagging metrics (this is apart from the investigation of semiotic, linguistic or sociological content that might be encoded into individual tags, such as seen in Wargo 2017). Thus, patterns of Tumblr tagging, of co-occurrence, frequency, or other

statistical factors, do not seem to be in the research, in stark contrast to Twitter[62]. This would suggest that the kind of research being undertaken in this present study is novel and should present some new insights.

It was also noted by Attu and Terras that Tumblr is "an immensely popular site for users seeking to participate in fan activities inspired by various cultural phenomena, such as writing fanfiction. In 2014 December, it was reported that over 1 per cent of all posts made on Tumblr were dedicated entirely to the band One Direction" (2017, p.540). Considering the popularity of Tumblr with fan communities, it is perhaps surprising that not more studies have been conducted by fan studies researchers, although there is admittedly a growing number of research. Attu and Terras' work only covered papers up to 2015, and so a brief summary of more recent papers which focus on Tumblr, particularly with respect to cult media fandom, is given here.

Misailidou (2017) explored the ways that fans of the TV series, *The 100* and *Once Upon a Time*, construct their fannish identities through their use of Tumblr, using a mixture of structured interviews, and discourse and visual analysis of individual Tumblr blogs. McGuire (2017) has investigated how Tumblr can be used in the classroom to engage students in multimodal writing activities, and has given practical guidance on how this might be achieved, including, as mentioned in section 1.7.4, forms of collaborative and peer learning. In a study which looked at various online community sites, including ones from the early years of the World Wide Web, such as UseNet, Bury (2016) discussed how technology has afforded the growth of fan communities, and which online platforms were more liable to foster fan communities than others. Bury found that listservs and sites such as LiveJournal fostered such communities, others such as Facebook did not – Tumblr, interestingly, was of the latter, mostly because of "the limitations of the platform not only for commenting coherently and cohesively

[62] Non-academic sites such as ToastyStats (http://toastystats.tumblr.com/), however, do present this kind of research. See also, for example, http://www.hautepop.net/tumblr-a-personal-network-analysis (accessed 16 November 2015) for an example of non-academic SNA research on Tumblr.

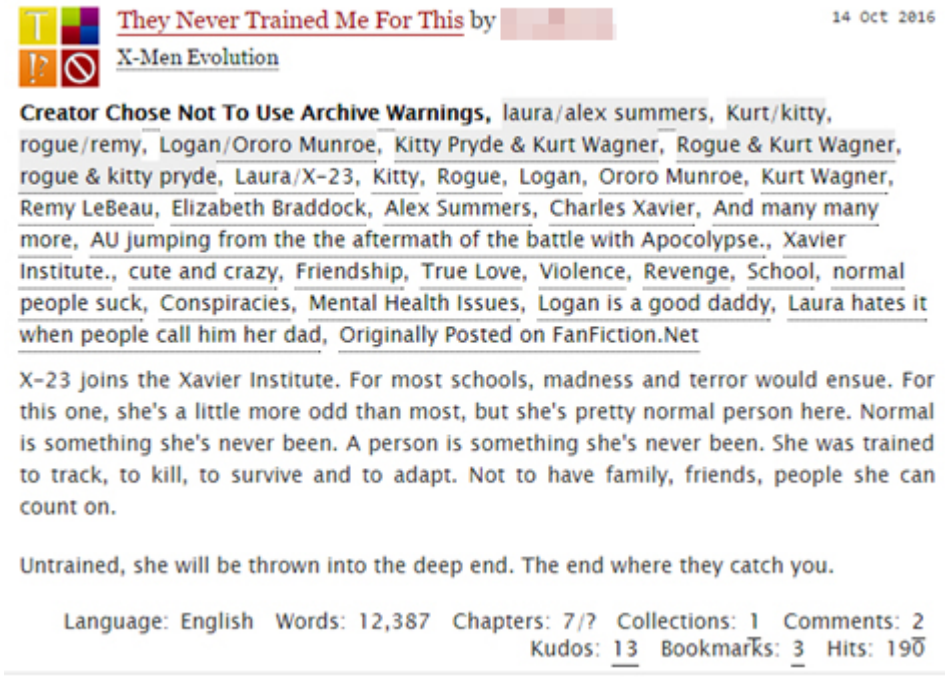
but for interactivity" and whilst it could "offer a range of fannish pleasures" its "architectures do not enable community formation" (Bury 2016, p.13). Gonzalez (2016) looked at the content of Tumblr posts on *Once Upon a Time* fan blogs, analysing how fans used the site to regulate the Swan Queen ship, and how interactions between fans depicted an "unspoken but palpable desire for homogeneity in fandom, which would allow for the positive aspects of fandom to continue unabated and the only negative tendencies that remain would be those that serve the gatekeeping function of maintaining peace" (Gonzalez 2016, n.p.). Lastly, in a study of female *Sherlock* fans over 50 on Twitter and Tumblr, Petersen (2017) discovered that participation in mediatised fan culture positively augments women's subjective ages, as age barriers are lowered and creative expression is encouraged.

This short survey of the recent Tumblr-related literature within fan studies illustrates that, as Attu and Terras' (2017) overview attests (the paper only covered research up to 2015), the focus of research still seems to be on issues of fan identity and how these play out via Tumblr postings. Nevertheless, new directions are visible here, particularly in McGuire's paper on using Tumblr as a platform for collaborative student writing. Importantly, there is no evidence of looking at Tumblr fandom from the viewpoint of fantagging statistics and/or metrics, further verifying the novelty of this research.

5.5.2. Archive of Our Own (AO3)

As with Tumblr, AO3 implements a combined self-tagging and automanual system. The site suggests pre-defined tags when filling them in, although taggers are free to choose whatever terms they wish. Tags do not take a hashtag format, and there are no restrictions on spaces, length or characters. Non-Roman script is also allowed.

Figure 31 shows a random search result of works archived under the 'Remy LeBeau/Rogue' tag. The tags are displayed after the archive warning (in this case, the author chose not to employ any archive warnings, e.g. violence, non-consensual sex, etc.).



They Never Trained Me For This by [redacted]
X-Men Evolution

14 Oct 2016

Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings, laura/alex summers, Kurt/kitty, rogue/remy, Logan/Ororo Munroe, Kitty Pryde & Kurt Wagner, Rogue & Kurt Wagner, rogue & kitty pryde, Laura/X-23, Kitty, Rogue, Logan, Ororo Munroe, Kurt Wagner, Remy LeBeau, Elizabeth Braddock, Alex Summers, Charles Xavier, And many many more, AU jumping from the the aftermath of the battle with Apocolypse., Xavier Institute., cute and crazy, Friendship, True Love, Violence, Revenge, School, normal people suck, Conspiracies, Mental Health Issues, Logan is a good daddy, Laura hates it when people call him her dad, Originally Posted on FanFiction.Net

X-23 joins the Xavier Institute. For most schools, madness and terror would ensue. For this one, she's a little more odd than most, but she's pretty normal person here. Normal is something she's never been. A person is something she's never been. She was trained to track, to kill, to survive and to adapt. Not to have family, friends, people she can count on.

Untrained, she will be thrown into the deep end. The end where they catch you.

Language: English Words: 12,387 Chapters: 7/? Collections: 1 Comments: 2
Kudos: 13 Bookmarks: 3 Hits: 190

Figure 31: Archive entry for an X-Men Evolution fanfiction on AO3, "They Never Trained Me For This", 14th October 2016. Source: http://archiveofourown.org/ (retrieved 24 December 2016).

Greyed out tags are Ship tags, denoting a romantic pairing of two characters, or Friendship tags. Character tags follow, and then descriptive tags. Normally, pre-defined tags start with a capital (e.g. "Mental Health Issues", "True Love", "School"). There are several tags that the author herself has applied freely to the fanfic. These express themes ("normal people suck", "cute and crazy") and story elements ("AU jumping from the aftermath of the battle with Apocolypse", "Logan is a good daddy"). These tags are typical examples of how users choose to tag their works on AO3, i.e. using a mixture of pre-defined tags and free ones. If a free tag becomes popular enough, it will be merged by a tag wrangler with a standard, pre-defined one; or a new tag will be entered into the system's taxonomy to accommodate it. For example, in Figure 31, the free Character tag, "and many many more" has been made equivalent to the standard tag "Other(s)" – if the tag is clicked on, it will lead to all works on the site that have used the tag "Other(s)" *or their equivalents*. Therefore, tag equivalencies, once determined by a tag wrangler, are saved automatically in the site's database.

5.5.3. Etsy

Etsy's tagging mechanism is also a self-tagging and automanual hybrid; a maximum of 13 tags are allowed. Others, such as Smith (2008b) and Warner (2011), have already given excellent accounts of how Etsy's tagging works. The automanual function suggests pre-defined tags for the resource. As Smith describes, "Etsy's pre-defined tags form the top-level category navigation on the website. The suggested tags are actually sub-categories for each of the main categories" (2008b, p.16). These can be seen in at the bottom of Figure 32, where the first four tags ("Home & Living", "Home Décor", "Frames & Displays" and "Frames") are hierarchical tags pre-defined by Etsy. The other tags are free tags entered by the user.

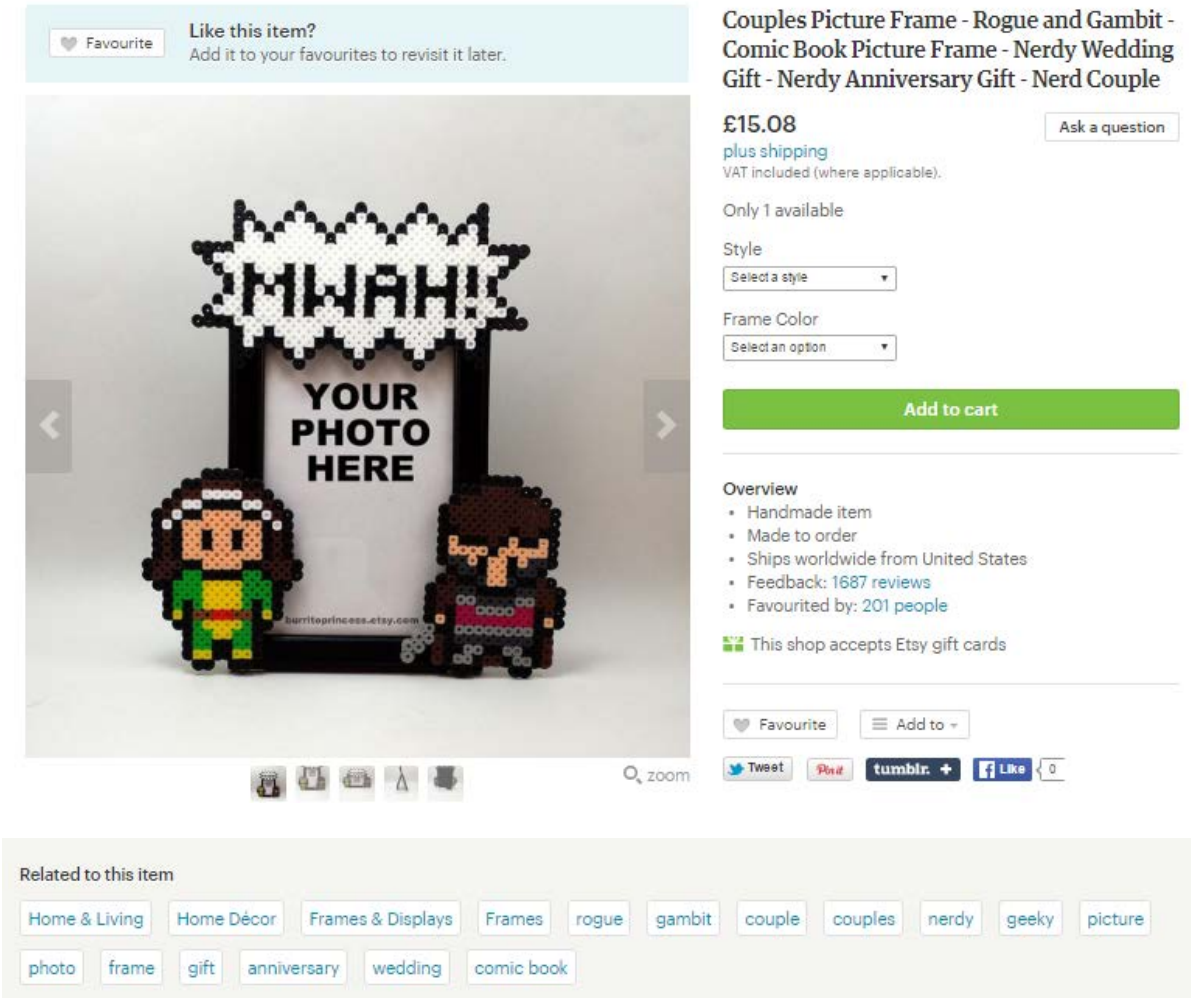


Figure 32: Couples picture frame – Rogue and Gambit. Tags are displayed at the bottom, in the box titled 'Related to this item'. The item details, usually under the picture, have been cropped here to save space. Source: https://www.etsy.com/ (retrieved 24 December 2016).

5.6. Tag analysis

This section details the process for the tag analysis on each of the three online platforms investigated.

5.6.1. Tumblr

Tumblr does not allow crawling of the site, meaning that tools such as SocSciBot cannot be used. Therefore, use was made of a Python script which could capture tag data via use of the Tumblr API. This required a Tumblr account and a Tumblr API authentication code and key. The Python script, get_tagstats.py, is an open source piece of code written by DestinationToast[63]. This script uses the Tumblr API to access a Tumblr tag and retrieve posts that use that tag, as well as other related information: the name of the originating blog; the URL of the originating blog post; co-occurring tags on the original post; type of post (e.g. text, image, video); notes the post received (e.g. reblogs, hearts or replies); time of posting. There were several advantages to using this script. Firstly, it was open source and was downloadable on GitHub. Secondly, it retrieved exactly the data needed for the tag analysis (i.e. co-occurring tags). Thirdly, the coder, DestinationToast, was happy to communicate, support and collaborate with the project.

There were, however, some problems with the script. The first was that the script had a bug that meant it was unable to crawl more than 1000 posts. In a large fandom, such as Harry Potter or Sherlock, a thousand posts are regularly made using the #HarryPotter and #Sherlock tags within a couple of days. However, since Romy is a small fandom, this disadvantage did not in fact, affect the study at all, as the script covered several years' worth of posts using the 'Romy' tag. After a few runs of the script, it was also discovered that posts from certain date ranges had been omitted from the crawl. This left holes in the data that were unacceptable. Fortunately, after many rounds of email communication and some

[63] Her blog, *ToastyStats: Fandom statistical analyses*, is available at http://toastystats.tumblr.com/

testing, DestinationToast reworked the script and both these limitations were ironed out (although retrieval remained buggy when setting the crawl at 5000+ posts, as, in the small 'Romy' dataset, older posts from around the 2009-2010 period – that is, the beginning of Tumblr – were crawled and set off the script's outlier detection – a problem that would not have existed in more popular fandoms with a larger amount of posts).

Since larger datasets were undesirable due to the timetable required for a doctoral research project, and since the script still had problems retrieving large numbers of posts, the script's search parameters were set to the last 2000 Tumblr posts that used the Romy tag. The minimum incidence of a co-occurring tag was set to 1 (i.e. posts using the Romy tag had to have at least 1 co-occurring tag). This was so that all tags with at least one other co-occurring tag could be represented. After collecting the data, the set needed to be cleaned. This is because the Romy tag is used in contexts other than within the X-Men fandom. Other posts using this tag fell under the following subjects/contexts:

- Romy & Michele's High School Reunion (movie)
- The XX (band, whose vocalist is called Romy)
- Romy Schneider (actress)
- Shoe brand
- Clothing brand
- Personal name
- Pet name

These data had to be removed from the set as they were irrelevant to the scope of the study. Whilst automated methods of cleaning data could have been implemented (e.g. Python, OpenRefine), it was decided that, since the dataset was small, manual cleaning would suffice, and would allow more hands-on manipulation of the data. As it happened, many of the irrelevant tags could be automatically removed as they could easily be identified (e.g. posts referencing Romy Schneider and The XX were particularly easy to identify through their co-occurring tags). However, this left some posts whose actual web pages needed to be checked manually. Any that were obviously not related to the X-Men fandom were removed from the dataset. In a very few instances, it was not possible to ascertain in what context the Romy tag

had been used. To err on the side of caution, these were left in the dataset. After the cleaning, 684 posts remained by a total of 186 users, covering the period of 28 January 2014 – 9 April 2016.

The data was then pasted into the NodeXL Excel template. NodeXL is an open source piece of software that is a network visualisation tool. It also allows the user to calculate network properties, such as betweeness centrality (the number of times a node – in this case, a tag – lies on the path between two other nodes, denoting its importance as a mediator between those two nodes) and group clustering (a group of nodes – in this case, tags – that are more connected to one another than they are to other nodes, thus denoting inter-relatedness between nodes). The drawback of using NodeXL (and other free software such as Gephi) is that they only allow one vertex pair in the network; that is, an edge can only connect 2 vertices – a source and a target. This is problematic in the context of this study, as many posts contain more than two tags (i.e. one source tag may link to more than one target tag). Several posts in the dataset contained upwards of 10 tags. Such a post would require a single source node to be connected to more than 10 target nodes with more than 10 edges.

There is a workaround for this problem, which is time-consuming but effective. This requires the creation of multiple edges through linking vertices into node pairs manually.

For example:

Vertex 1	**Vertex 2**
Tag 1	Tag 2
Tag 2	Tag 3
Tag 1	Tag 3

In other words, each tag must refer back to the other tags in its set, instead of creating an extra vertex column for tag 3, 4, 5 etc.

Whilst some posts had many tags, it was decided to limit the data analysis to only the first 5 tags (if, of course, there were 5 tags or more in a post). The reason for this was that five

was a reasonable number of tags to import into NodeXL using the workaround, without the process becoming cumbersome. Not only this, but some portions of the site appear to limit their search retrieval to the first five tags (see note 61, p.224). The final dataset was presented as follows:

Vertex 1	**Vertex 2**
Tag 1	Tag 2
Tag 2	Tag 3
Tag 1	Tag 3
Tag 3	Tag 4
Tag 2	Tag 4
Tag 1	Tag 4
Tag 4	Tag 5
Tag 3	Tag 5
Tag 2	Tag 5
Tag 1	Tag 5

The above pattern was entered for each post.

This did, unfortunately, end up in some data loss, as vertices can only be presented in pairs (i.e. a source cannot be without a target and vice versa). So for example, if there was a Tag 1, but no corresponding Tag 5 in the dataset, this entry was necessarily removed.

Since NodeXL is case sensitive, further normalisation was required. For example, instances of 'romy' and 'ROMY' were replaced with 'Romy'. Contracted names were separated out; for examples, 'remylebeau' was replaced with 'Remy LeBeau'. Obvious spelling mistakes and typos were corrected (e.g. 'Gamit' corrected to 'Gambit'; 'Rouge' corrected to 'Rogue', etc.). This was so that the network's vertices were properly represented (i.e., so that 'Romy' and 'romy' would not be represented by two separate nodes, as they are exactly the same in meaning). However, synonyms were not merged (e.g. 'Rogue x Gambit' was not changed to 'Romy'). In order to preserve the idiosyncrasies of the Romy folksonomy intact, they were preserved in their entirety. Lastly, duplicate vertex pairs are considered redundant, and were merged together using NodeXL's merge tool. This resulted in a total 2338 vertex pairs or edges.

After cleaning the data, the next step was to code the remaining tags by type. The typology used is shown in Table 14 (p.218), as outlined by Smith (2008a), which is in turn an amalgamation of the typologies developed by Golder and Huberman (2006) and Marlow, Naaman, boyd et al (2006). Whilst coding, it became clear that the fine granularity of the tags in the dataset could not be adequately described by Smith's very broad outlines. It was then decided to use inductive coding to create a more granulated typology that could better describe the type of fan-tags present in the dataset. This modified typology would use Smith's as a base, adding new categories in a nested format under Smith's main categories. New categories would be added as and when a new tag type was encountered in the data.

This process of inductive coding continued throughout the social media data analysis, over all three of the sites studied. From this iterative process, a final taxonomy was developed by the conclusion of the social media data analysis, which is presented in Table 23 (p.243).

Two datasets were created from the Tumblr data. One of the top tag users in this set was Participant A, whose account functioned mainly as an aggregator of fanworks related to the Romy fandom, unlike the other accounts in the dataset. Therefore, in order to moderate the skewing affect Participant A's tagging might have on the set, a second set was created where Participant A was removed and the data thus normalised. This would enable a comparison to be made between the two datasets, and thus ascertain whether there was any appreciable difference between the original and normalised data.

Having created these two sets, the tags were clustered according to tag type, using NodeXL. This helped to visualise the distribution of tags during the time period that the data was collected, and to give a visual snapshot of tag usage within the Romy community on Tumblr (see Figure 38, p.249).

5.6.2. Archive of Our Own (AO3)

Archive of Our Own (AO3) is a fanfiction archive which was developed and run by fans for fans. It allows users to organise and categorise their work using tags. However, in a system dubbed a 'curated folksonomy' by Bullard (2014), volunteers called 'tag wranglers' filter these tags by associated them with established synonyms. This flexible system allows for both individual idiosyncrasies in user tagging behaviour to remain intact, whilst also enabling efficient search retrieval. It does however require considerable effort on the part of the volunteers in order to combine user tags with established synonyms.

AO3 does not use tags in the same way that Tumblr or Twitter does. Tags are based on their own 'home page' that has its own URL. Tags therefore cannot be harvested in the way Tumblr or Twitter tags can – they can only be retrieved via a static URL address.

A crawl of the Romy tag on AO3 was made using SocSciBot 4.1[64]. SocSciBot is a free research crawler programme that was developed by information science professor Mike Thelwall at the University of Wolverhampton, specifically for the social sciences and humanities. Its use within information science has been positively advocated by Thelwall (2004), and it has seen wide use within the discipline, especially in webometrics, altmetrics, and link analysis research (recent examples include Thelwall 2017; Hendrikx et al 2016; Saha and Mukhopadhyay 2016; Thelwall and Kousha 2013; Sugimoto and Thelwall 2013). Whilst this demonstrates that SocSciBot has a long and productive history within information science and informatics, there were also other advantages, such as the control one has in setting crawl parameters. For instance, a 'banned list' can be sent up so that certain webpages are not crawled. It also allows for datasets to be exported in a variety of formats, which enabled these to be imported into NodeXL for the same data analysis and visualisation that was used on the Tumblr dataset, thus providing consistent analysis between datasets.

[64] http://socscibot.wlv.ac.uk/

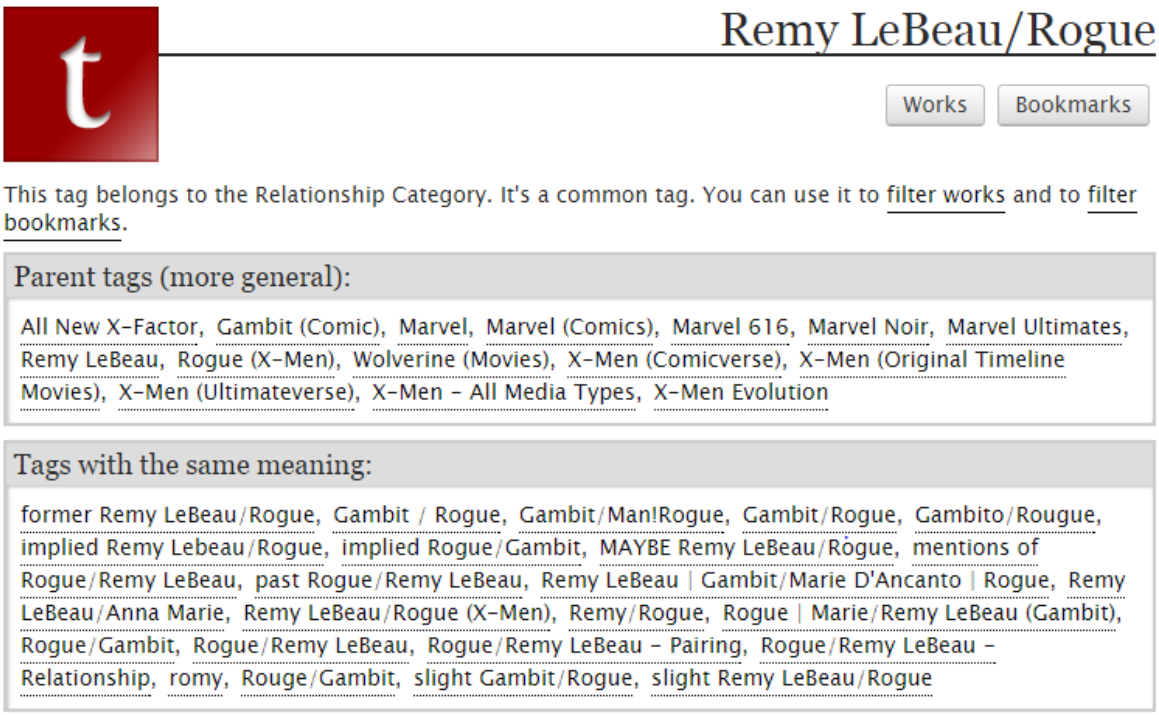


Figure 33: AO3's 'Romy' tag homepage. Note that the standard form for 'Romy' on AO3 is 'Remy LeBeau/Rogue'. User tags that have been designated by tag wranglers as synonyms are shown under 'Tags with the same meaning' (retrieved 23 December 2016).

The crawl of the Romy tag on AO3 took place on 29 April, 2016. The maximum number of pages to crawl was 1000, and, as with Tumblr, the max crawl depth was set to 1. This was in order to limit the crawl *only* to pages which co-occurred with those using the Romy tag. To ensure that only web addresses for tags were returned (rather than for the actual works themselves), the crawl was set to collect only pages that began with the URL http://archiveofourown.org/tags/.

'Romy' as a tag is not used on AO3. AO3 operates a classification method, called 'tag wrangling', whereby popular user tags are collated together by volunteers under a synonymous 'parent tag'. Thus, any work tagged 'Romy' by the user will be gathered under the standardised tag 'Remy LeBeau/Rogue' (http://archiveofourown.org/tags/Remy%20LeBeau*s*Rogue/). Figure 33 shows the 'Remy LeBeau/Rogue' tag homepage. The difficulty with this crawl is that SocSciBot will not crawl a URL that is composed of special characters. In this case, the URL that needed to be crawled

includes asterisks, which SocSciBot will not crawl. However, each tag, whether parent, child or orphan, has its own page. For example, 'Romy' has its own page, which links back to the parent tag, 'Remy LeBeau/Rogue (http://archiveofourown.org/tags/Romy). Thus, the crawl started with this URL.

The crawl returned all data as URLs. The list of banned URLs did not work, and so these had to manually be stripped from the data afterwards. These included URLs which were searches (archiveofourown.org/tags/search), or feeds (e.g. archiveofourown.org/tags/47170/feed.atom). The data was saved as a Pajek file (.net). The Pajek format was used as it is a widely used standard within network science, and is interoperable with many programmes, such as SocSciBot, NodeXL, Gephi, and others (Batagelj and Mrvar 2014). The resulting Pajek file was imported into NodeXL. Here the data was cleaned and the URLs rendered in their plain tag form (e.g. 'archiveofourown.org/tags/kitty*s*kurt' became 'kitty/kurt'). During this process several problems were encountered, as listed below:

- Due to SocSciBot's limitations, some URLs were truncated. For example, all instances of ' in a URL were rendered as &, and the rest of the URL was not rendered. For example, archiveofourown.org/tags/darcy%20likes%20&. In cases such as these, the original tag was often considered irretrievable. Since these examples were now rendered useless, they were removed from the dataset. Some, however, could be reconstructed by searching for the tag via Google (e.g. archiveofourown.org/tags/dracy%20and%20logan%20aren& contained a spelling error ('dracy' instead of 'darcy'), and could easily be found through a Google search (the final tag was 'dracy and logan aren't normal').
- Some tags can be deleted, presumably if the work it was attached to is removed by the author. In such cases, the tag was left in the data set.

- Due to the dynamic nature of AO3, tags are always being merged with standard synonyms. The dataset therefore does not reflect changes made to tags post-analysis.

URLs that included works and bookmarks using the Romy tag (archiveofourown.org/tags/remy%20lebeau*s*rogue/bookmarks and archiveofourown.org/tags/remy%20lebeau*s*rogue/works) were also included in the dataset, as these included all tags co-occurring with the Romy tag. The final dataset included a total of 8182 individual tags, with a total of 4368 tag names.

The next stage was to create a separate dataset by merging synonyms according to their tag wrangled version (i.e. their standardised form as determined by AO3's tag wranglers). Thus all incidences of 'Romy' were merged with 'Remy LeBeau/Rogue', 'ultimate x-men' was merged with 'x-men (ultimateverse)', 'logan – oc' was merged with 'logan (x-men)/original character', and so on. After merging all synonyms, this left all tags that were not popular enough to have been 'tag wrangled' yet. These comprised the 'long tail' of the dataset. The wrangled dataset came to a total of 4946 individual tags, with a total of 2752 tag names. This indicates that 63% of tags that co-occur with 'Romy' have been wrangled by tag wranglers.

There were now two datasets – one comprising pre-wrangled tags, and one comprising wrangled tags (if, indeed, a tag was popular enough to have been wrangled), allowing for both sets to be compared. As with the Tumblr dataset, each tag was manually coded to a tag type, using the same iterative, inductive process as used with the Tumblr dataset. Five new tag subtypes (types 1.7-1.11) were added during this stage of the process. Again, the tags were clustered according to their tag type.

5.6.3. Etsy

Etsy is an online marketplace that caters specifically for handmade and vintage goods; most of its users are individual sellers or small businesses. It is also home to a growing number of fandom-related stores that offer handmade items created for fans. These would include

postcards, prints, badges and jewellery featuring favoured characters, or even items of clothing for cosplay. Items can be tagged by the seller to enable more efficient search retrieval; a maximum of 13 tags may be used per item – unlike Tumblr, all appear to be indexed. As with AO3, the 'Romy' tag is not commonly used on Etsy; in this context, it is more often used with goods pertaining to the film, *Romy and Michele's High School Reunion*. The synonyms 'Rogue and Gambit' or 'Gambit and Rogue' are more often used by Etsy sellers, and so the tag 'Rogue and Gambit' was the base tag for Etsy tag analysis[65].

As with Tumblr, Etsy does not allow crawling of the site. Fortunately tag data could be gathered using EtsyRank, a free service developed using the Etsy API. This service includes a Keyword Tool, which allows any Etsy tag to be searched; the tool will retrieve all posts that use the tag, along with other details such as item views, likes, shop or seller name, and also co-occurring tags.

The data collection took place on 2nd June 2016. EtsyRank was able to harvest data on *all* currently active postings that used the 'Rogue and Gambit' tag. This returned a total of 173 individual posts. Since this dataset was comparatively small, the data was manually imported into an Excel spreadsheet, which was then brought into NodeXL; each tag was then assigned to a tag pair, as outlined in the Tumblr section (pp.232-233). After this process, the total number of individual tags came to 4603, with only a total of 438 tag names.

As with previous datasets, each tag was coded by type, and then clustered according to that type.

5.7. Supplementary interviews

In order to check the results of the social media data analysis, supplementary, semi-structured interviews were conducted. A total of 6 participants were interviewed, two from

[65] EtsyRank will retrieve both posts using the 'Rogue and Gambit' tag and posts using both 'Rogue' and 'Gambit' as co-occurring tags.

each of the platforms investigated in the social media data analysis. To facilitate anonymity, these participants are coded A-F, and are identified thus throughout this section. The rationale for the use of the interview method can be found in section 3.3.3.4.

5.7.1. Criteria for participant recruitment

In the case of Tumblr and Etsy, interview participants were to be recruited from the users whose posts had been collected in the social media data analysis. It was decided that the most popular users from each site would be approached. Whilst this can skew results (Liu, Morstatter, Tang et al 2016, give an excellent account of social media mining bias), this method was chosen as these participants would likely have far greater post (and thus tag) visibility; would possibly be more conversant in their tagging practices; and would probably have a better understanding of how their tagging affected both their own information behaviour and that of their audiences.

Different criteria were used in the case of AO3. This was because AO3 presented an opportunity to engage tag wranglers themselves in their roles as a part of a volunteer-led curated folksonomy, and, more importantly, in their perceptions of themselves as fandom gatekeepers. Therefore, AO3 interviewees were recruited from the tag wranglers.

To differentiate the case study participants from the Delphi participants, each was given an alphabetical identifier, rather than a numerical one.

5.7.2. Recruitment

For Tumblr and Etsy, interview participants were recruited from the most popular users of the 'Romy' tag (or its synonyms) on each of those platforms. For Tumblr, this was determined by ascertaining the two users with the most notes (that is, those whose posts received the most 'likes' and 'reblogs', which collectively are called 'notes'). These two users were then sent an invitation to participate in interviews via Tumblr's private messaging system. Once participation was agreed, information sheets and consent forms were sent via

email (see Appendices R, p.444, and S, p.445). The following interviews were also conducted via email. The user with most notes on Tumblr was Participant A (with 21481 notes and a total tag count of 1185); the user with the second most notes was Participant B (with 3009 notes and a total tag count of 227).

Similarly, Etsy's two most popular sellers of items using the 'Rogue' and 'Gambit' tags were ascertained according to the number of 'hearts' their items had received. As with Tumblr, invitations were sent out to potential participants using Etsy's private messaging system; the rest of the interview process took place via email. The most popular seller was Participant E (with 913 hearts and a total tag count of 13); the second and third most popular sellers did not respond to invitations to participate. The fourth most popular seller, Participant F (with 416 hearts and a total tag count of 13), did respond.

In the case of AO3, a different approach was used. It was decided to interview two tag wranglers who worked specifically on works in the Marvel fandom. This was because: a) they would likely have wrangled the tags in the AO3 dataset, and; b) they might shed some light on the tag wrangling process, how it impacts the site, and whether there were any perceptions that wranglers might be gatekeeping access to and organisation of fan-related information. Contact with tag wranglers must be made through the Organization for Transformative Works (OTW), who runs AO3; thus a private message was sent to the Communications Team via a contact form on the AO3 site. In order to be approved for scholarly research on the site, information sheets, ethics checklists, consent forms and interview guides (see Appendices R-T, pp.444-448) were emailed to the Communication Team Co-chair. Once approval was granted, interviews with the tag wranglers (Participants C and D) were mediated electronically by the co-chair. For this reason, the interviews were structured rather than semi-structured, due to the considerable time and negotiation between mediations, and the questions being mediated through a third party. Nevertheless, some valuable data were gleaned from the responses. Questions sent to the participants are in Appendix U (p.449).

5.7.3. Process

Interviews were conducted online via email, once consent forms had been returned. Once participants had replied, their answers were saved in PDF format and uploaded into NVivo11. Analysis followed the model previously used in the Delphi study (see section 4.7.1), i.e. participant responses were coded in NVivo, using the thematic codes developed throughout the literature review and the Delphi study (see p.185 for the list of thematic codes). Additionally to this, codes developed during the social media data analysis, which are detailed in Table 23 (p.243), were also used as thematic codes. Finally, and in line with the inductive coding approach also used in the Delphi study, new themes were added as previously unexpressed concepts were conveyed by the participant, ensuring inclusion of all issues stated.

When responses highlighted concepts that required further investigation, a follow-up email was sent with further questions. Once replies were received, they were coded in the aforementioned manner.

5.8. Analysis

As discussed on p.234, the coding process throughout the social media data analysis was inductive and the taxonomy was added to throughout analysis of the results from all three platforms, the purpose of which was to ensure the accuracy of each tag's meaning. The final taxonomy can be seen in Table 23 (p.243).

As far as possible, the same methods of analysis were used for each of the three sites, as well as for the interview responses. This was to enable a more holistic interpretation of the case study results. For example, the final taxonomy developed during the social media data analysis was used in the coding of the interview responses, in conjunction with the themes developed during the Delphi study and the inductive method when this was called for. The intent was to find a way to more effectively synthesise the quantitative and qualitative data.

CODE	TAG TYPE/SUB-TYPE	DEFINITION	EXAMPLES
1	**Descriptive**	Describes content	vintage; commission; black and white; regram
1.1	Fandom	Describes fandom	X-Men; Marvel; Avengers; Harry Potter
1.2	Ship	Describes characters in a romantic relationship	Romy; Erik Lehnsherr/Charles Xavier; loroki
1.3	Character	Describes characters	Gambit; Rogue; Thor; Wade Wilson
1.4	Genre	Describes genre of resource	drabble; fluff; angst; slash; steampunk
1.5	Event	Describes a 'real world' event	Christmas; Valentines Day; dragoncon
1.6	Person	Describes a 'real world' person	Channing Tatum
1.7	Friendship	Describes characters in a friendship	kitty pryde & kurt wagner; darcy and logan
1.8	Organisation/Team/Group	Describes a group of people	witches; Hydra; X-Men; Illuminati
1.9	Location	Describes a location or setting	Alkali Lake; Xavier Institute; Wakanda
1.10	Plot	Describes a fictional story element	M-Day; Crimson Gem of Cyttorak
1.11	Warning	Describes sensitive content	spoilers; swearing; rape/non-con
2	**Resource**	Type of resource	comics; drawing; photo; video
2.1	Fanwork	Type of fan resource	fanfic; fanart; cosplay; fanfic rec list
2.2	Title of fanwork	Title of fan resource	In Between; Loki and the Loon
2.3	Citation	Citation of fan resource	Episode: Shadowed Past; X-Men Legacy 272
3	**Ownership**	Ownership of tagger	mike draws
3.1	Creator/source	Name of fan resource creator	Jim Lee; toyscomics; bbrae; ishandahalf
3.2	Recipient	Name of intended recipient of fan resource	txpeppa
4	**Opinion**	Opinion on resource	sexy; geeky; quirky; badass; epic
4.1	Communication	Communicates thoughts	I blame Tumblr; I need this shirt; great gift idea
4.2	Explanatory	Explains resource content	this is how I vent; iron fist is shameless
4.3	Affective	Explains emotional reaction	poor Pietro; ineedhelp; theyre so cute omg
4.4	Conversational & enunciative	Instigates or responds to a dialogue	why?; ask me stuff; leah shut up; askbox
4.5	Emoticon	Visual communication	XD; :D; 0:)
5	**Self-reference**	Reference to tagger/self	personal post; my art; self; my life
6	**Task organising**	Personal organisation of resource	work in progress; other character tags to be added; queueballs
7	**Play & performance**	Resource is part of an event, or has some performative aspect	prompt fill; fangirl challenge; frostiron month

Table 23: Fan-tag taxonomy as developed during analysis of the 'Romy' tag. Tags in bold denote Smith's (2008a) original categories. Non-bold tags denote those developed through inductive coding of the datasets. Examples given are taken from the datasets.

5.8.1. Tumblr

In total there were 624 named tags that co-occurred with 'Romy' in the Tumblr dataset. After merging tags (e.g. 'remylebeau' with 'Remy LeBeau'; 'rouge' with 'Rogue') there was a total of 535 named tags. The final individual tag count was 4582. The entire network is laid out in Figure 34, which is a directed co-occurrence graph for the 'Romy' tag on Tumblr, grouped by tag type, laid out using the Fruchterman-Reingold algorithm. This algorithm is based on "forces in natural systems, for a simple, elegant, conceptually-intuitive, and efficient algorithm" (Fruchterman and Reingold 1991), and was chosen as it "attempts to dynamically find a layout that clusters tightly connected nodes near one another" (Smith et al 2009). Compared to other algorithms that were applied to the data using NodeXL, Fruchterman-Reingold was the most visually coherent and pleasing, and had the advantage of clearly presenting nodes and the relationship between clusters, as can be seen in Figure 34. Edge opacity is denoted by the edge weight (denoting how many times a tag pair co-occurs); vertex size by betweenness centrality; tag type by colour and vertex shape (see section 3.3.3.2 for more detail on the terms used in social network analysis). Figure 35 depicts all tags with a betweenness centrality of 1 or above: this indicates tags that are on a pathway between two other tags and are therefore more significant carriers of information content. Fifty-six (10.5%) tags reached this value – most of these tags were represented by the **Descriptive** tag type, specifically **Ship**, **Character**, **Fandom** and **Fanwork** sub-types, thus highlighting the importance that these types have in mediating information within the Romy fandom. As can be seen in Figure 35, the tags that have the highest betweenness centrality are those that have the largest nodes. Since 'Romy' is the base tag, it is not surprising that it has the highest betweenness centrality, and is therefore the highest carrier of information content between tags; this was followed by **Character** type tags – 'Rogue' and 'Anna Marie' (synonymous), and 'Gambit' and 'Remy LeBeau' (synonymous); and **Resource** type tags – 'fanart' 'fanfic' and 'fanfiction' (synonymous), and 'Romy fanfic' also had high betweenness centrality.

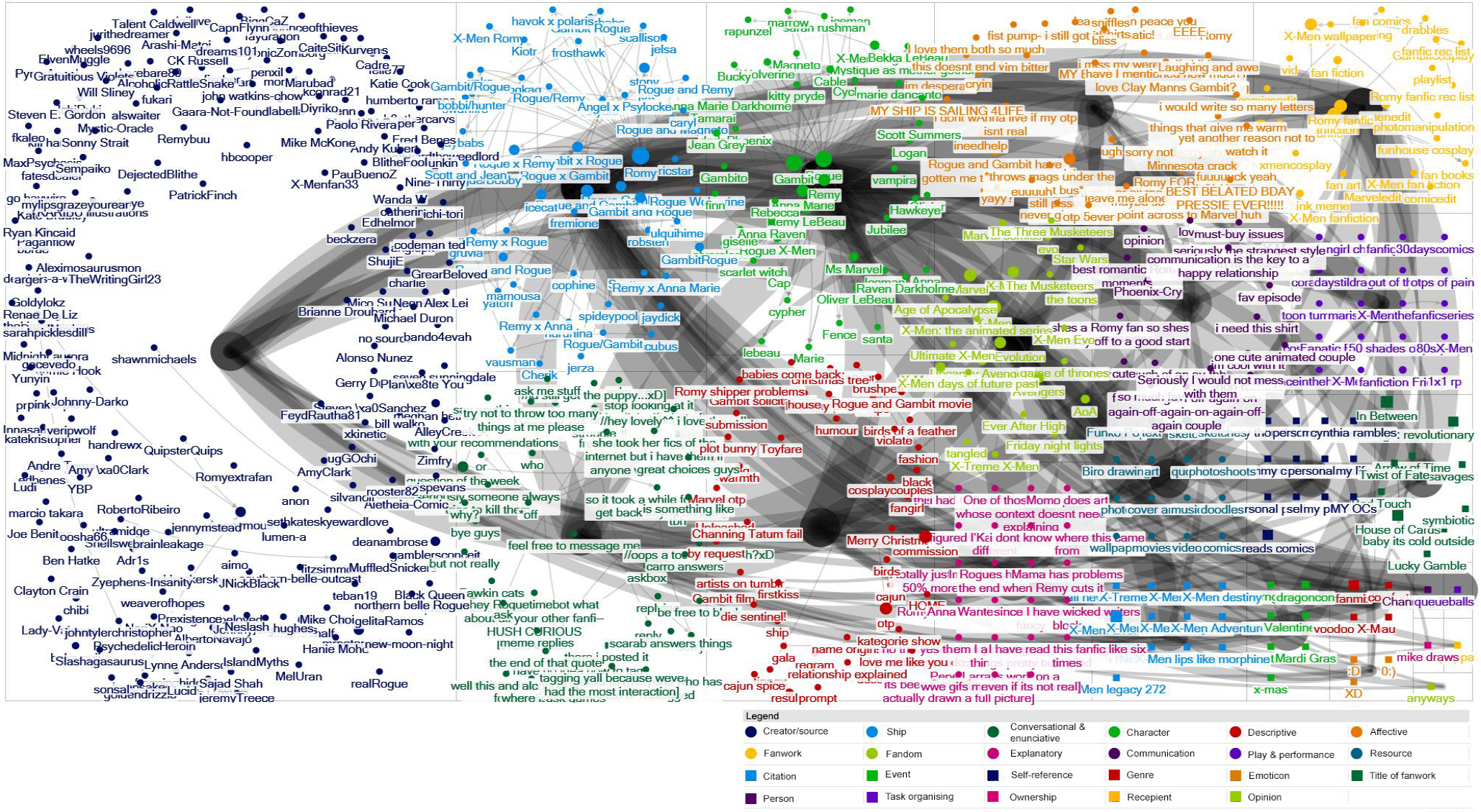


Figure 34: Co-occurrence graph for the 'Romy' tag on Tumblr.

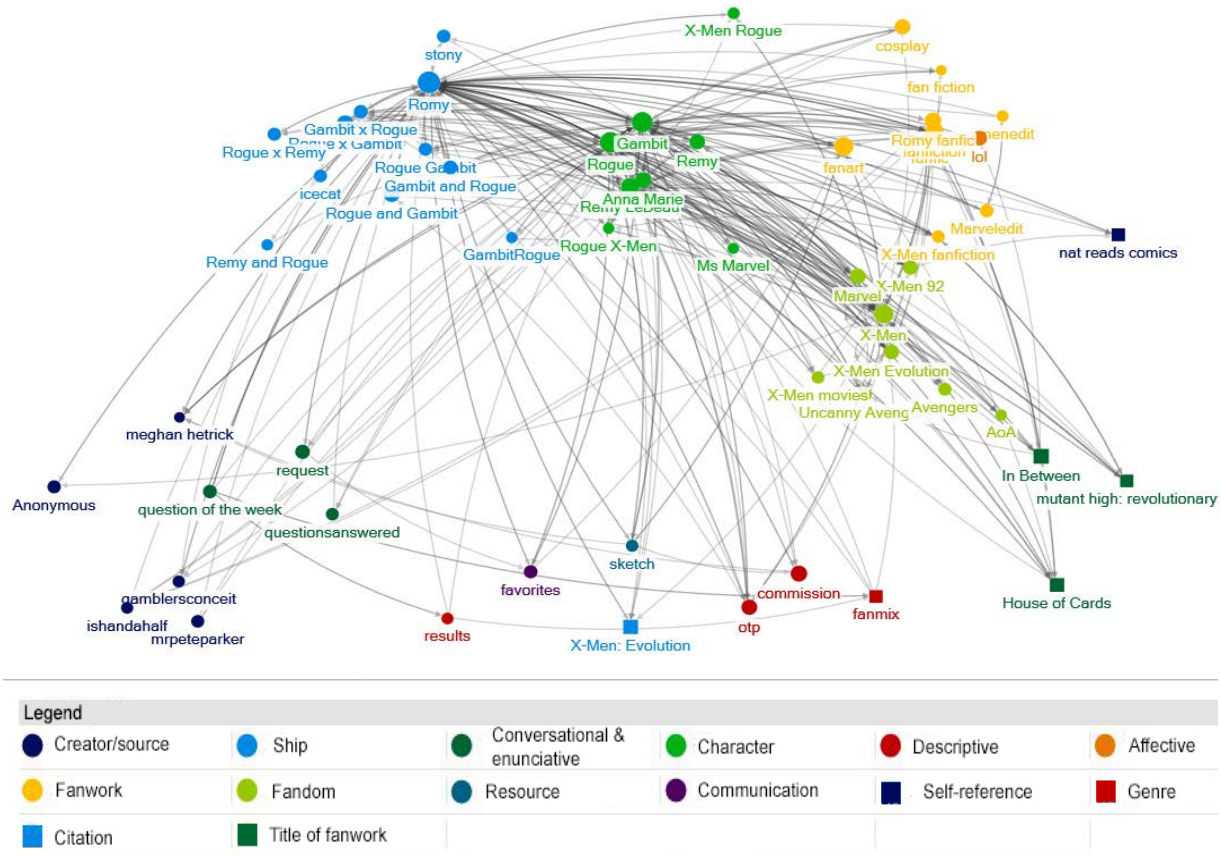


Figure 35: Co-occurrence graph for the 'Romy' tag on Tumblr. All displayed tags have a betweeness centrality of 1+.

Figure 36, which shows the total tag count arranged by tag type, demonstrates that the bulk of all Tumblr tags used were classified as **Descriptive** tags. When arranged by sub-type, Figure 37 shows that the **Character** and **Ship** sub-types (both **Descriptive** sub-types) were the most popular respectively. This was followed by the **Creator/Source** sub-type (an **Ownership** sub-type), which is used to denote the author of a fanwork. This type was heavily used by Participant A's account, which, as an aggregator of Rogue-related fanworks, concentrated on reblogging other peoples' work, and used the tag function to indicate the original author of the post.

Participant A's blog was the top user of the 'Romy' tag on Tumblr, but the nature of the account was very different from other users in the dataset. As stated above, Participant A's blog mainly serves as a community account, aggregating fanworks and serving as a hub for the Rogue fandom on Tumblr; whereas other users in the dataset were individuals posting on a personal basis. Because of this, it was decided to create a second, normalised dataset from

the Tumblr results, wherein Participant A's data were removed. This was in order to mitigate any skewing effects, if any, these data might have on the overall analysis of the set.

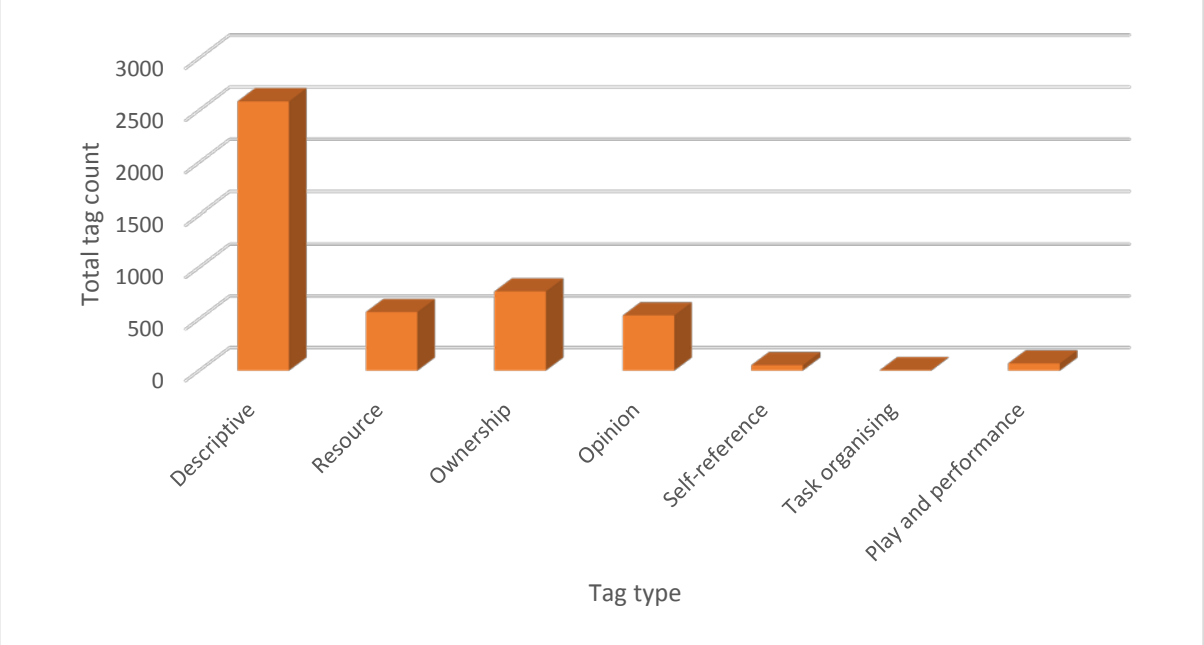


Figure 36: Total Tumblr tag count by type (see Table 15, section 5.8 for tag types).

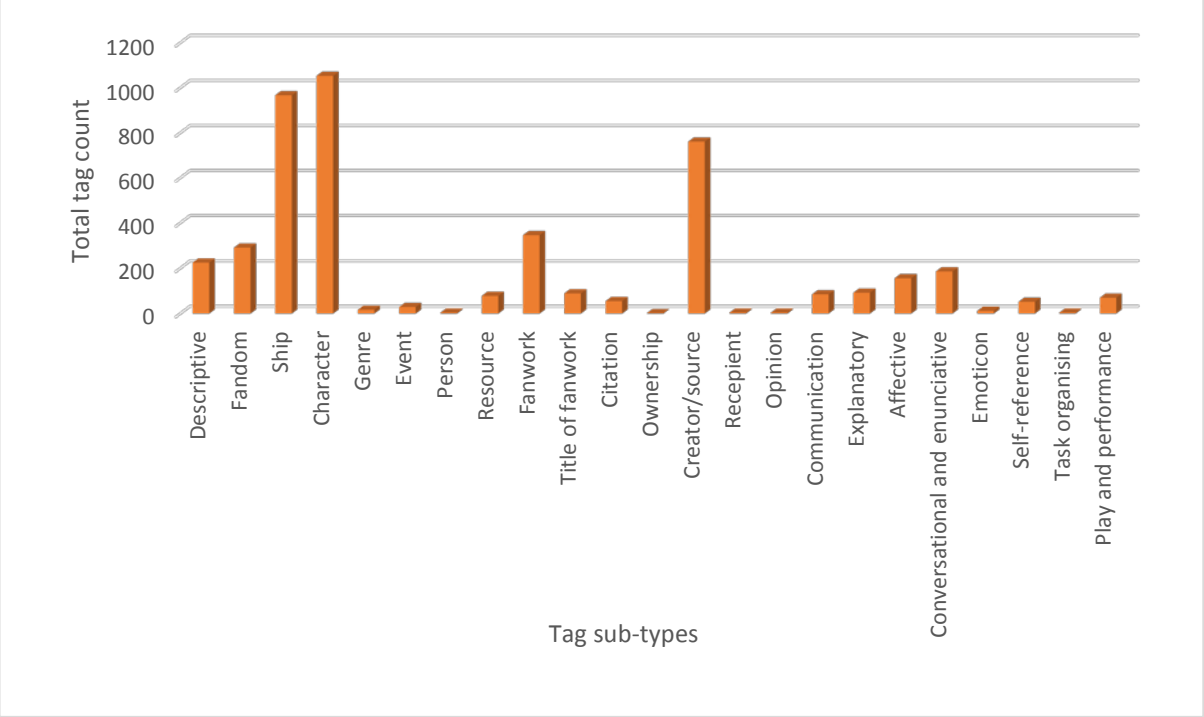


*Figure 37: Total Tumblr tag count by sub-type (see Table 15, section 5.8 for tag types). The **Character** type (a Descriptive sub-type) was the most frequently used tag, closely followed by **Ship** (also a Descriptive sub-type).*

Figure 38 shows the results of this normalisation. Contrary to expectations, the normalised dataset (i.e. with Participant A's data removed) did not show any marked overall difference to the original dataset. It had been expected that the **Ownership** tag type had been heavily skewed by Participant A's data, and that its usage would diminish after normalisation. In actual fact, the percentage of total tags that could be classified under **Ownership** were slightly higher after normalisation. Overall, there was minimal difference between the percentages of tag type usage before and after normalisation, i.e., Participant A's tag usage did not inordinately skew the results of the dataset.

Figure 39 shows the same comparison, this time broken down by tag sub-type. Again, there was little significant difference between the normalised and pre-normalised datasets. The most notable difference was in the **Character** sub-type. Usage of this tag sub-type was markedly lower after normalisation (23% versus 16% respectively). This suggests that Participant A's account uses the **Character** sub-type far more whilst tagging their posts. Possibly this is because Participant A's is a Rogue community account, rather than a Romy community account, and therefore focuses on other ships or pairings involving Rogue, e.g. Rogneto (Rogue/Magneto) and Rogan (Rogue/Logan). Therefore, naming characters becomes more important in classifying the different ships portrayed in Participant A's posts, and making sure that the right audience can find the most relevant post.

Figure 40 shows a comparison of the tag usage of the two most popular users of the Romy tag on Tumblr. The comparison indicates that the tag usage of the two accounts is very similar, except in two respects. Participant A has a higher occurrence of tags in the **Ownership** type, specifically the **Creator/Source** sub-type. As an aggregator of others' posts, Participant A is careful to cite or credit the source of the original work as well as add relevant descriptors, as mentioned in their follow-up interview:

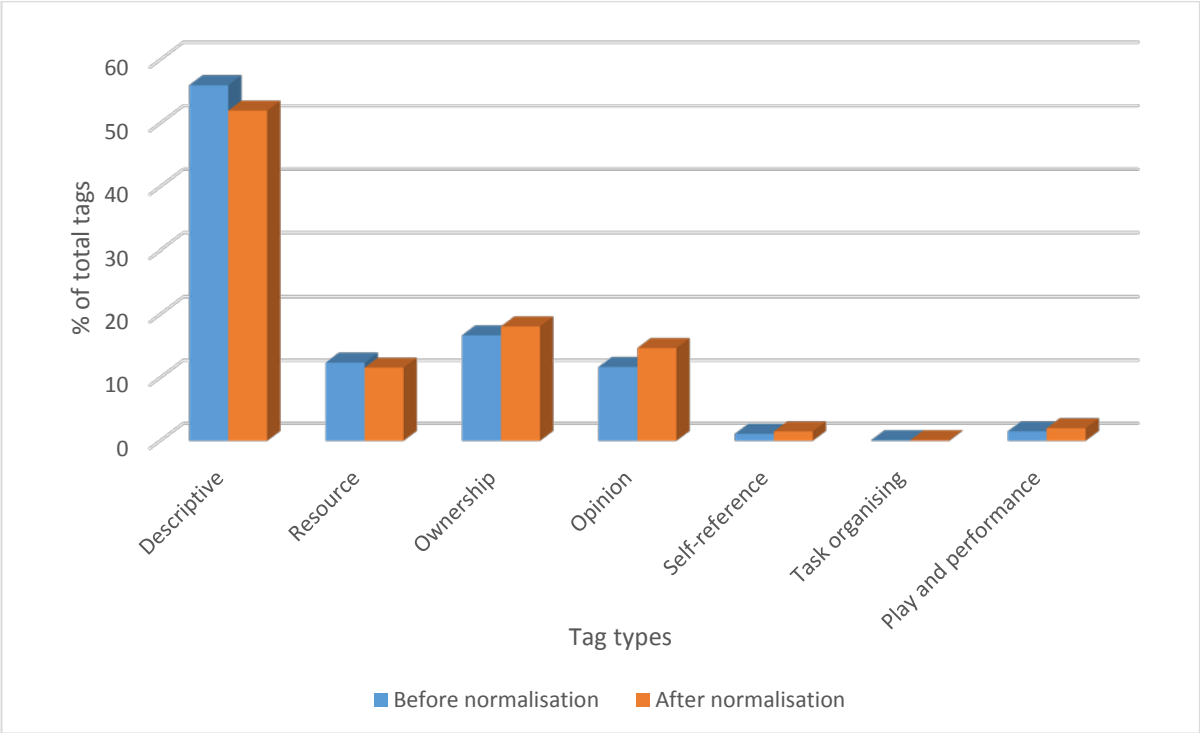


Figure 38: A comparison of Tumblr tag counts by type, before and after normalisation (see Table 15, section 5.8 for tag types). There is no marked difference between datasets before and after normalisation.

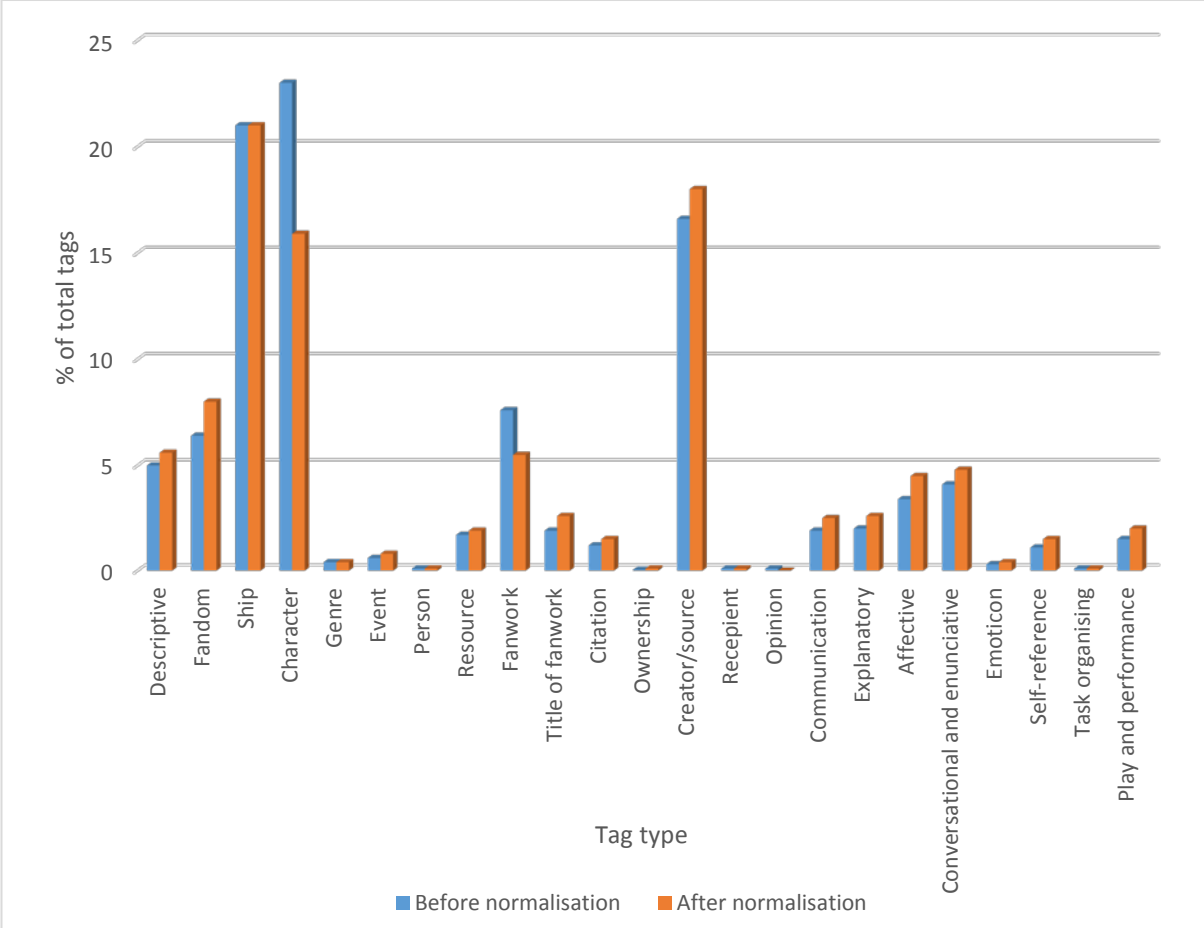


*Figure 39: A comparison of Tumblr tag counts by sub-type, before and after normalisation (see Table 15, section 5.8 for tag types). The most marked difference is in **Character** sub-type usage.*

> I'm thinking of the audience I have in mind when I tag things, so I put in character names, relationship names, and artists/creator.

In comparison Participant B has a higher occurrence of **Opinion** type tags, specifically in the **Communication** sub-type. These are idiosyncratic tags, sometimes formatted as sentences over multiple tags, which the user may employ to communicate thoughts, feelings and emotions. Some of Participant B's examples of these tag-(sub)types are:

> its been 6 months since Ive actually drawn a full picture];
>
> Rogue and Gambit have gotten me thru a lot of dark times;
>
> Rawrrr comics are supposed to make a person happy Damnit;
>
> READ THIS NOW;
>
> i have no idea how to tag people on tumblr dear;
>
> :)

These examples express a wide range of affective and communicative impulses on Participant B's part. Indeed, Participant B was the heaviest user of the **Opinion** and **Communication** (sub)-type tags, which she readily admits in her interview:

> More often than not I use tags to voice personal opinions so I don't ruin the aesthetic of the original post.

Participant B also mentions other forms of communication via Tumblr tagging during reblogging, such as "personal opinions or replies to the tags in the original post. My personal favorite thing is when followers say nice or supportive things in the tags when they repost my stuff."

It would be interesting to do some further research on why exactly users on Tumblr choose to use the tag space as a forum for communication and personal opinion, rather than the caption/description boxes themselves. Admittedly, this type of tagging practice has been noted on other platforms such as Flickr (Ziesemer et al 2016); though I would venture to say that what is described in that context is not as novel or sophisticated in terms of its

manipulation of the technology as is witnessed on Tumblr. What is described by Ziesemer et al (2016) does not appear to include the kind of detailed affect that Participant B's blog demonstrated.

What analysis of the Tumblr tag usage shows is that, in the Romy fandom at least, descriptive tagging is of paramount importance. Users appear to be heavy users of the **Character** and **Ship** tag sub-types. This indicates that *fan identity* is at the foremost of fans' tagging behaviour, i.e. signalling to other fans the basic classification of ones' own fan identity – in other words, *this is the ship I support, these are the characters I support*. In its own way, content description is a form of communication, a way of 'speaking' to other fans, of making sure that an author's post reaches the right audience – a fellow fan with the same basic fan identity. This kind of phenomenon has been seen in contexts other than fandom – for example, Wargo (2017) discusses how the #donttagyourhate tag on Tumblr is a way to signal (or curate, as Wargo puts it) one's own identity as a #socialjusticewarrior. In a similar vein, tags such as 'Romy' can be used to curate one's own fan identity, as well as the content of one's post or blog.

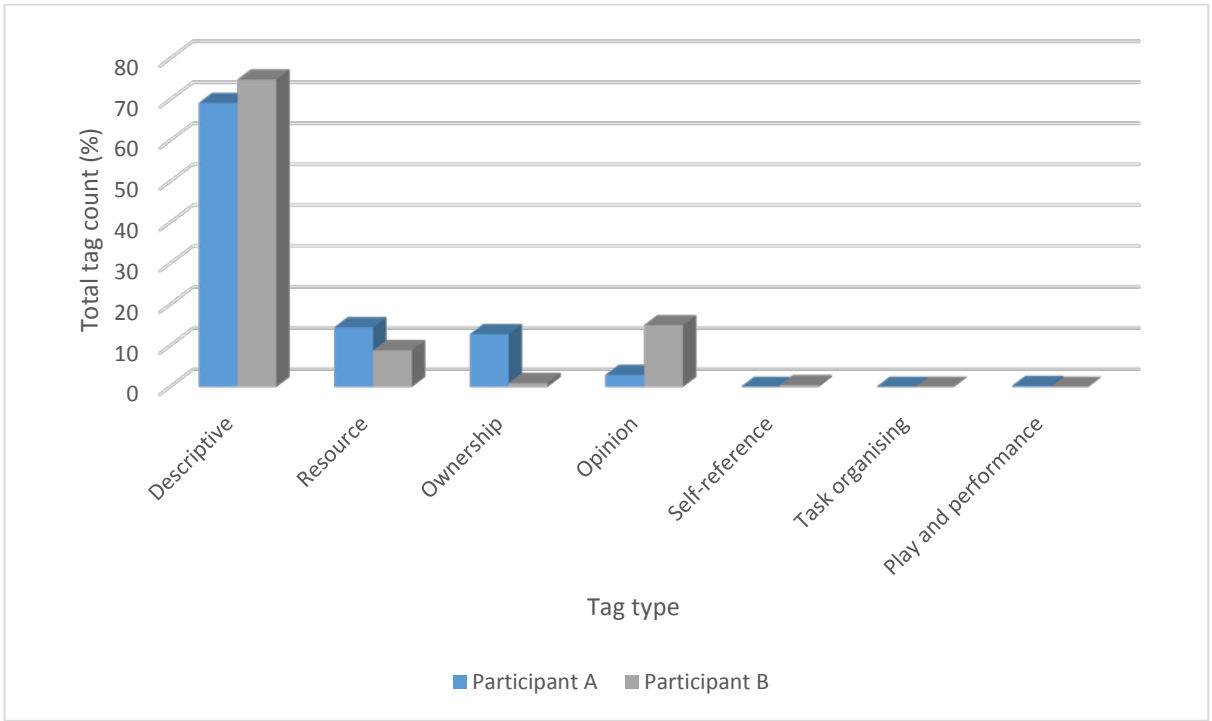


*Figure 40: Comparison of tag type usage by Participant A and Participant B, by percentage (see Table 15, section 5.8 for tag types). Participant B showed marked use of the **Opinion** tag type.*

Subordinate to this signalling of fan identity via descriptive tagging, but still of significance, is the importance placed on ownership. Whilst crediting sources might be considered basic netiquette, Tumblr Romy fans, particularly community user Participant A, made a point of naming sources. This might be considered a way of denoting a piece of artwork that belongs to someone else, so that praise (or criticism) is not directed erroneously to the poster if they did not create it. This is especially important on Tumblr, as one of the site's main functions is to 'reblog' other people's posts with the click of a button. Reblogging allows a user to add their own tags to a work, and this is where adding an original **Creator/Source** tag would be appropriate.

It would appear that some tags are also used as forms of potentially dialogic communication, although this was not employed by all users. In such cases, the tags were used in a manner which appears to be unique to Tumblr. Multiple hashtags could be employed by a user to express thoughts or emotions that were especially complex. This phenomenon might be considered similar to footnotes, meta-commentary, or indeed, paratext, qualifying or framing the main content of the post. These tag types are however more personal in nature, and not all users chose to employ them. Accounts like Participant A's, whose function in the Tumblr Romy community is different to other users in the dataset, used **Communication** or **Opinion** type tags much less frequently.

5.8.2. Archive of Our Own (AO3)

There were two different datasets created from the AO3 Romy tag crawl. The first was designated the 'pre-wrangled' dataset – that is, all the tags were the original versions that had been input by the user. The second was designated the 'wrangled' dataset – that is, all tags that had been filtered by a tag-wrangler and merged with their parent tag (e.g. all instances of "aggressive flirting" are merged with the standard tag "Flirting"; "team fic" with "Team", etc.). Therefore, the 'wrangled' dataset showed higher levels of homogeneity and much lower tag name counts than the 'pre-wrangled' set. The 'pre-wrangled' dataset comprised a total of

8182 individual tags, and 4638 different tag names. The 'wrangled' dataset comprised a total of 4946 individual tags, and 2752 different tag names. This indicates that well over half of the tags in the data set (63%) had been processed by tag-wranglers. Interestingly, and in contrast to the Tumblr findings, the Romy fandom on AO3 exhibited a much wider scope of co-occurrence with other tags used on the site. Whilst on Tumblr the 'Romy' tag seemed to co-occur mostly with other tags related to the Romy and X-Men fandom, on AO3 its use was distributed amongst other fandoms, mostly from the wider Marvel Universe (e.g. the Avengers), but also amongst non-Marvel fandoms such as Harry Potter. This suggests a much higher degree of connectedness and crossover between fandoms on the AO3 platform.

Figure 41 shows a directed co-occurrence graph for the 'Romy' tag on Tumblr, grouped by tag type, laid out using the Fruchterman-Reingold algorithm. Edge opacity is denoted by the edge weight; vertex size by betweenness centrality; tag type by colour and vertex shape. Figure 42 depicts all tags with a betweenness centrality of 1 or above (that is, tags that appear to be more efficient carriers of information content within the network). Three hundred and nineteen (11.6%) tags reached this value, which was similar to that found on Tumblr (10.5%). Again, and in common with Tumblr, most of these tags were represented by the **Descriptive** tag type, specifically **Ship**, **Character** and **Fandom** sub-types – these figures were similar in both 'pre-wrangled' and 'wrangled' datasets.

It was this similarity between the results of both the 'pre-wrangled' and 'wrangled' datasets that comprised the main findings of AO3's tag sampling. It had been expected that the effect of the tag wrangling process would be evident on the 'wrangled' dataset, thus implying that some form of gatekeeping or bibliographical control was being exerted by the tag wranglers. In fact, there was very little difference between pre-wrangled and post-wrangled tag usage. Figures 43 and 44 compare the number of tag names in both pre-wrangled and wrangled datasets – they show very similar tag type and sub-type usage patterns, despite the standardisation of the wrangled set.

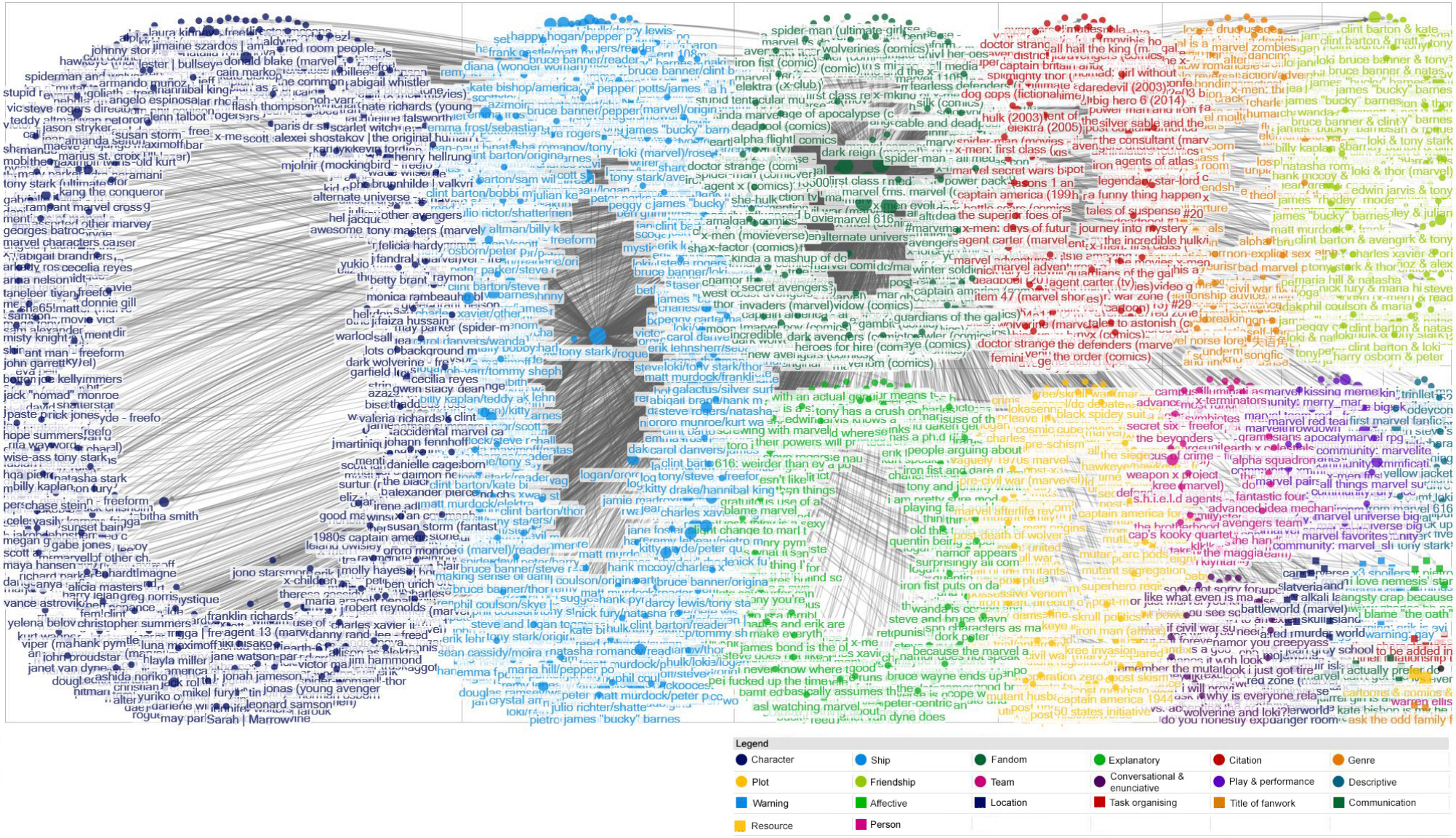


Figure 41: Co-occurrence graph for the 'Rogue/Remy LeBeau' tag on AO3 (from the wrangled dataset).

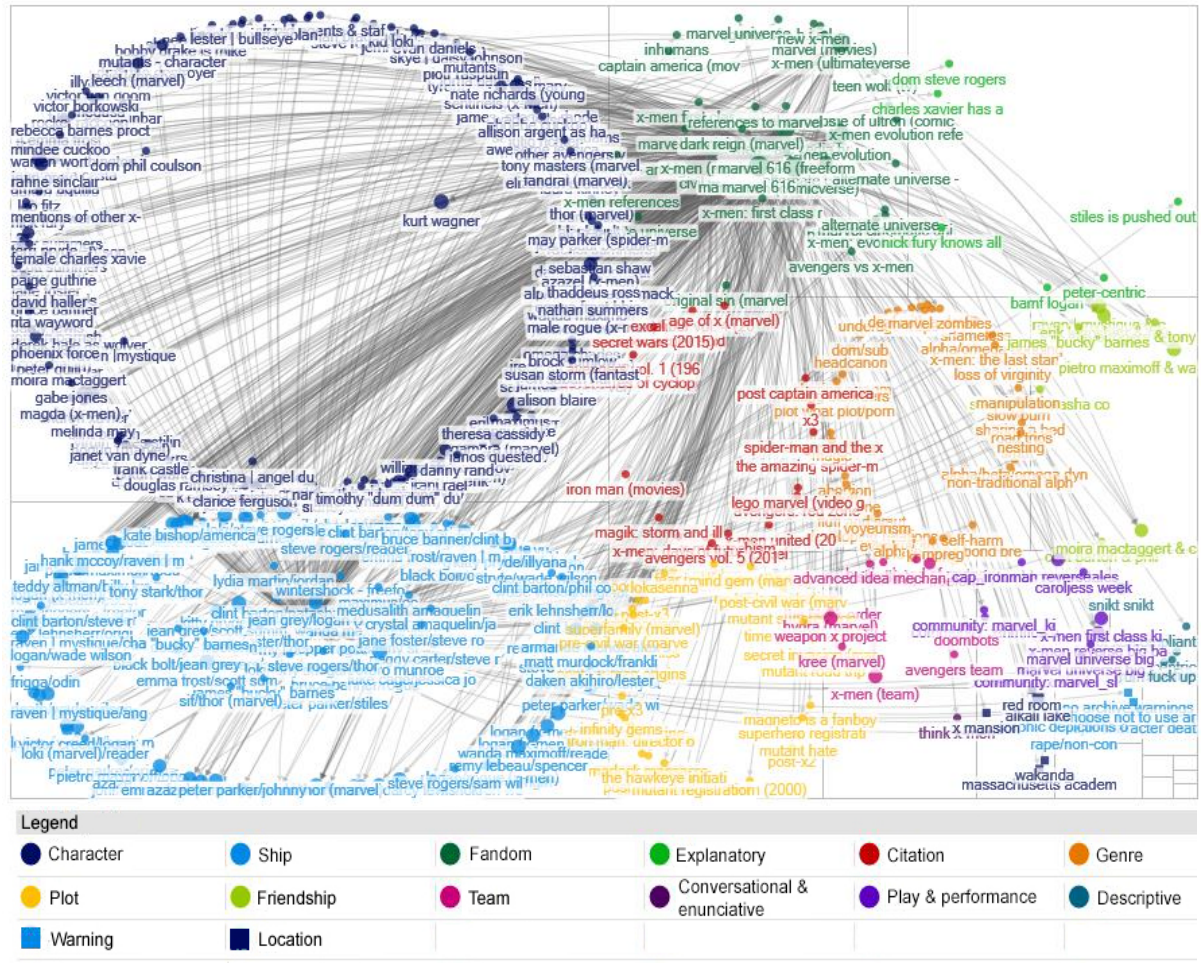


Figure 42: Co-occurrence graph for the 'Rogue/Remy LeBeau' tag on AO3 (from the wrangled dataset). All displayed tags have a betweeness centrality of 1+.

This would suggest that tag wrangling is *not* a form of gatekeeping of the vernacular – or indeed, the taxonomy – used in the Romy or wider Marvel fandoms. Nor is it gatekeeping in terms of the bibliographical control of fanworks. This is borne out by the interviews with the tag wranglers, who confirmed that they do not see themselves as gatekeepers, and that they try to follow the original tagger's meaning and intent as closely as possible (see p.274). Examples from their interviews show considerable expertise in their chosen area (i.e. the Marvel Universe), and therefore it may be concluded that, in order to do their task properly, tag wranglers pride themselves on being able to recognise the obscure references in certain tags, preserve them in the wrangling process, and standardise them if warranted. As one of the interviewed tag wranglers said:

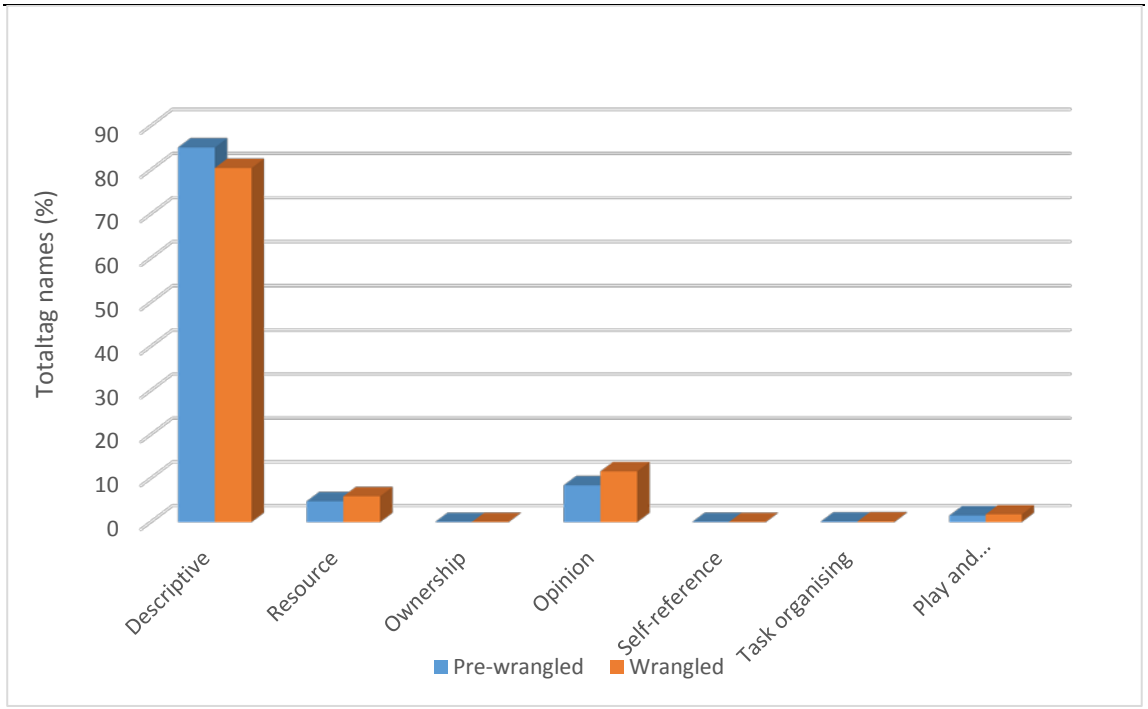


Figure 43: Comparison of pre-wrangled and post-wrangled tag names, by type (see Table 15, section 5.8 for tag types). There is little appreciable difference.

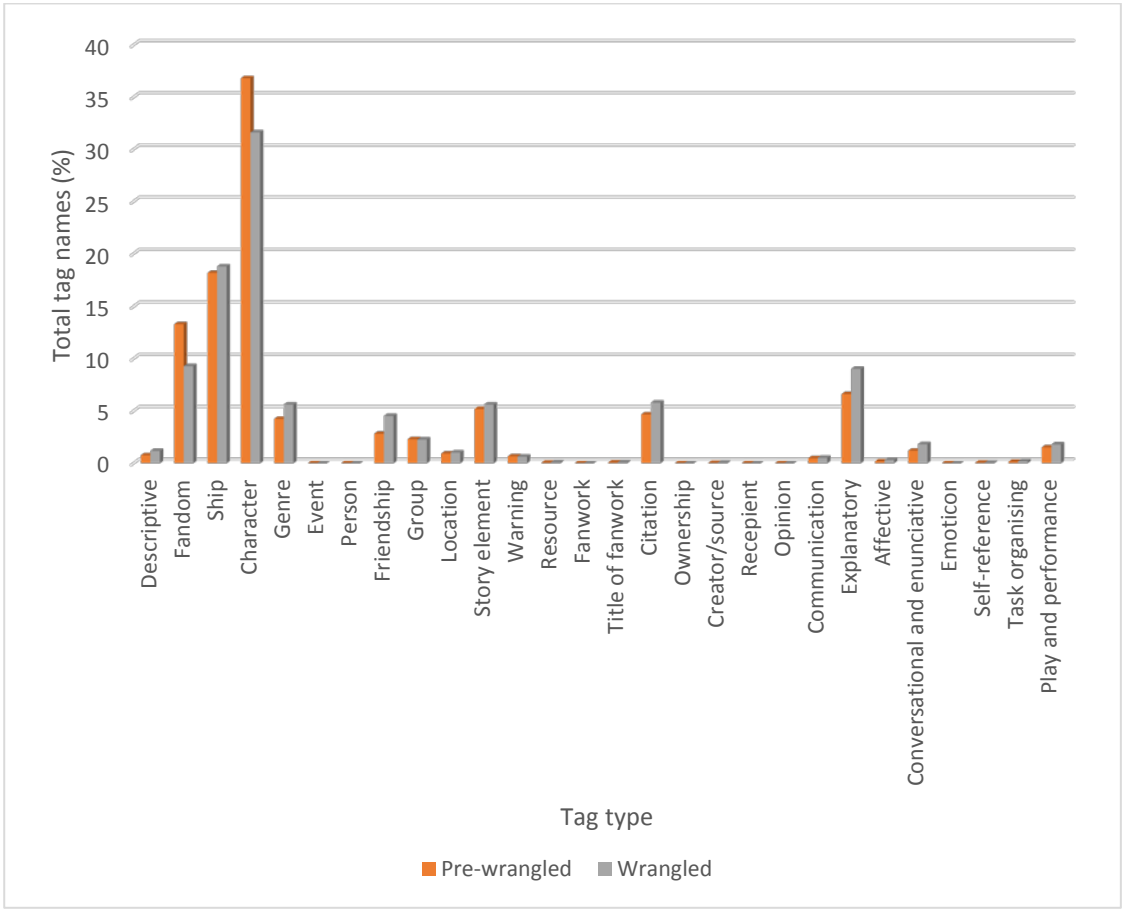


Figure 44: Comparison of pre-wrangled and post-wrangled tag names, by sub-type (see Table 15, section 5.8 for tag types).

> What I do see myself as providing is a chance to make too many years reading a lot of comic books useful. Marvel has a very, shall we say, dense, history. But if you think there aren't users out there who will tag for characters who appeared in one issue of Fantastic Four back in 1973, I want to assure you: you are wrong (Participant D).

This knowledge capital could equate to some prestige in the fan community, but it is important to note that tag wranglers do not benefit from this, as they are unseen and anonymous.

Unlike Tumblr, **Ownership** type tags were seldom employed as ownership was inherent in the post itself (i.e. the author of the story is the poster of the content). The **Descriptive** type was highest, particularly the **Character** sub-type, which denoted the characters present in the story (arguably characters are the most important aspect of a story, enabling readers to easily find the characters they want to read about). **Communication** was the second highest tag type employed, and surprisingly this type showed a marked percentage rise post-wrangling. This may be because **Communication** (sub)-type tags are idiosyncratic, and unlikely to be used more than once. Since their usage is so low, this means that they are rarely tag wrangled and merged with other tags that are synonyms. Therefore, their percentage of the total tag count tends to remain static, while other tag types, particularly **Descriptive** and **Resource** tags, tend to be readily merged with already-existing synonyms, which therefore reduces their percentage of the total tags within the post-wrangled dataset.

As with **Ownership**, there was negligible use of **Self-reference** or **Task organising** tags (less than 1%) in both datasets. There was some slight use of the **Play and Performance** tag type, and this was used in very specific instances (indicating stories written as part of events, competitions, contests, challenges or games, which were mostly hosted on other social media sites). Examples of these were 'i accepted a few prompts', 'community: xmen15', 'secret mutant ficathon 2014' and 'x-men big bang challenge'.

Figures 45 and 46 show a comparison of the total tag count used in the 'pre-wrangled' and 'wrangled' datasets. Figure 45 demonstrates that on the level of tag type, there is an almost negligible difference between the two sets. Figure 46, however, shows some significant disparities at the level of tag sub-type. These are at the following sub-types: **Ship**, **Character**, **Friendship**, **Citation** and **Explanatory Communication**.

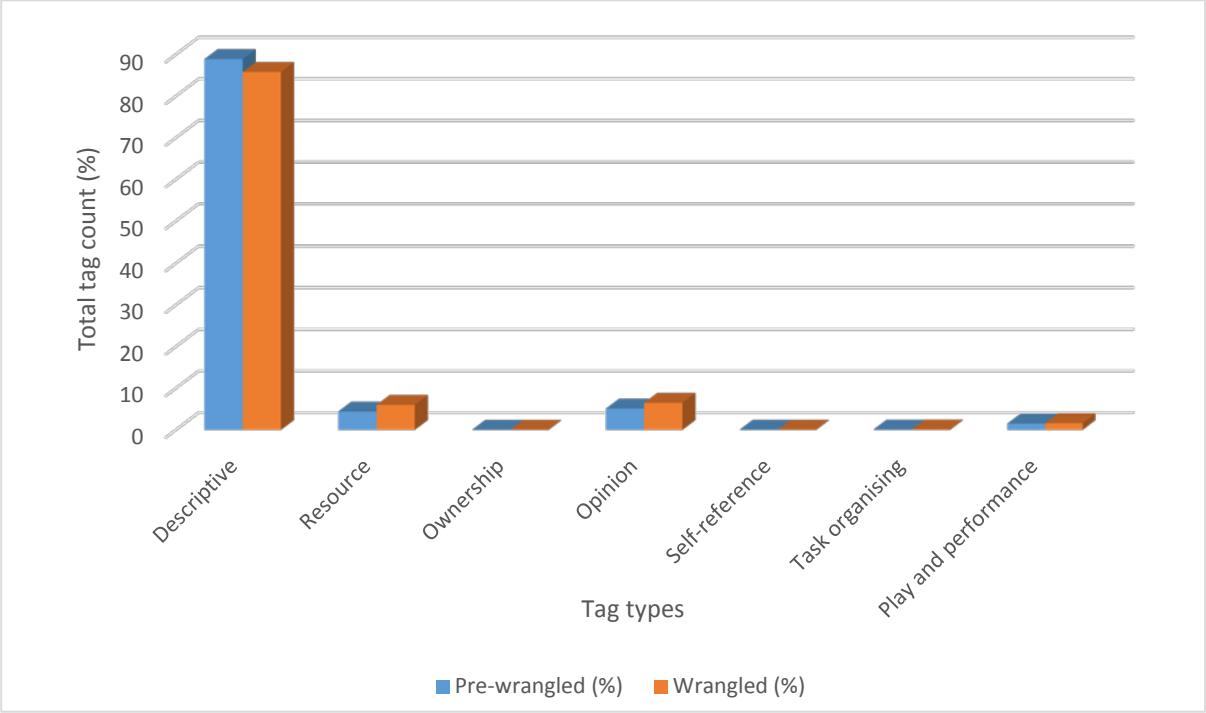


Figure 45: Comparison of the percentage of the total tag count in the pre- and post-wrangled datasets, arranged by tag type (see Table 15, section 5.8 for tag types). There is little appreciable difference.

It seems that this is where the long tail of tags manifests itself most clearly. This long tail is made up of all the tags that are not popular enough to have been wrangled. However, it was noticed during the merging of pre- and post-wrangled tags that several more obscure tags had been 'shoehorned' into a standardised tag that did not encapsulate the specificity of its original meaning. To take the **Citation** sub-type as an example, the tag 'Star-Lord and Kitty Pryde', which is the title of a comic series, and of low popularity, has been tag-wrangled into a synonym of the much broader Fandom sub-type, 'Marvel'. Likewise, the **Ship** tag 'loroki' (denoting the Loki/Storm pairing) has also been made a synonym of 'Marvel'. Thus in both cases the precise meaning of the original tags have been lost in the process of tag-wrangling,

and both have also been classified under an inaccurate sub-type. Whilst examples of this are on the whole in the minority, they are still frequent enough that it would suggest that, at the tag sub-type level, tag wrangling is slightly *less* successful than it is at the tag type level. Such funnelling of less popular tags into inaccurate tag sub-types (even if they are still in the same tag type) might account for the unusual spikes in the **Friendship**, **Citation** and **Explanatory** sub-types in the 'wrangled' dataset, and in the **Character** sub-type in the 'pre-wrangled' dataset.

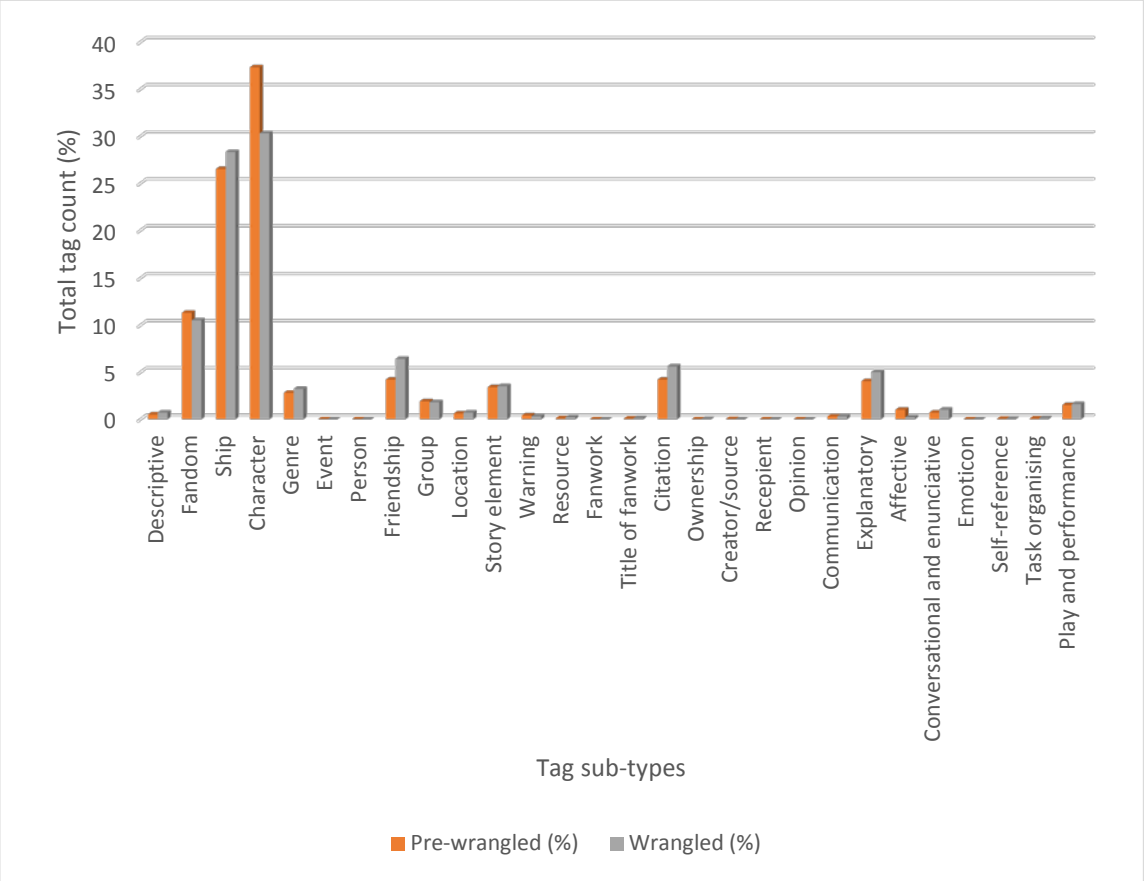


Figure 46: Comparison of the percentage of the total tag count in the pre- and post-wrangled datasets, arranged by tag sub-type (see Table 15, section 5.8 for tag types). ***Ship****,* ***Character****,* ***Friendship****,* ***Citation*** *and* ***Explanatory*** *sub-types show the most marked difference.*

5.8.3. Etsy

In total there were 438 named tags. Merging tags (e.g. 'remylebeau' with 'Remy LeBeau'; 'rouge' with 'Rogue') was not required with this small dataset. The final individual tag count was 4603. Whilst this tag count was similar to Tumblr's, the number of named tags used

was actually lower in Etsy's dataset than in Tumblr's. This suggests Etsy has a smaller core taxonomy for the Romy fandom than Tumblr does.

Figure 47 depicts a directed co-occurrence graph for the 'Gambit and Rogue' tag on Etsy, grouped by tag type, laid out using the Fruchterman-Reingold algorithm. Edge opacity is denoted by the edge weight; vertex size by betweenness centrality; tag type by colour and vertex shape. Figure 48 depicts all tags with a betweenness centrality value of 1 or above, showing the tags that are the most effective information or content carriers. Most of these tags were represented by the **Descriptive** tag type, specifically the **Character** sub-type. Other tags with high usage in the **Descriptive** and **Resource** types were of a very generic quality and were *not* fandom-specific. For example, descriptive tags such as 'blue', 'drawing' and 'vintage' were very popular. **Resource** tags such as 'comic books', 'illustration' and 'art' were also popular. By contrast, these more generic type tags saw far less use on Tumblr and AO3. This may suggest the Etsy tagger assigns far more importance to the *basic nature* of the item being sold, probably with the intent of attracting an appropriate buyer. Also of note is the fact that the **Ship** tag sub-type, so popular on Tumblr and AO3, makes little appearance on Etsy, being reflected only in the 'Gambit and Rogue' tag.

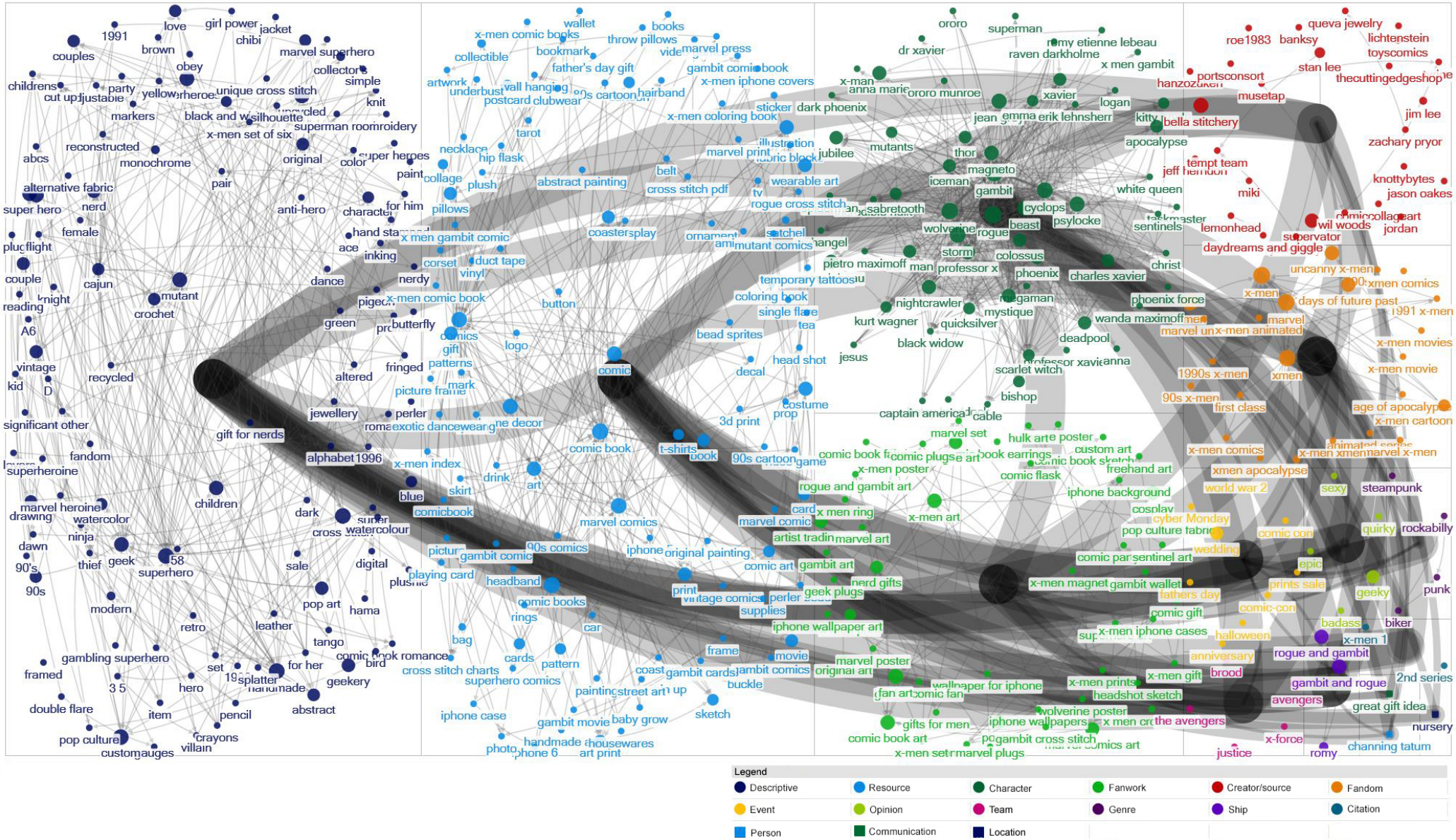


Figure 47: Co-occurrence graph for the 'Rogue and Gambit' tag on Etsy.

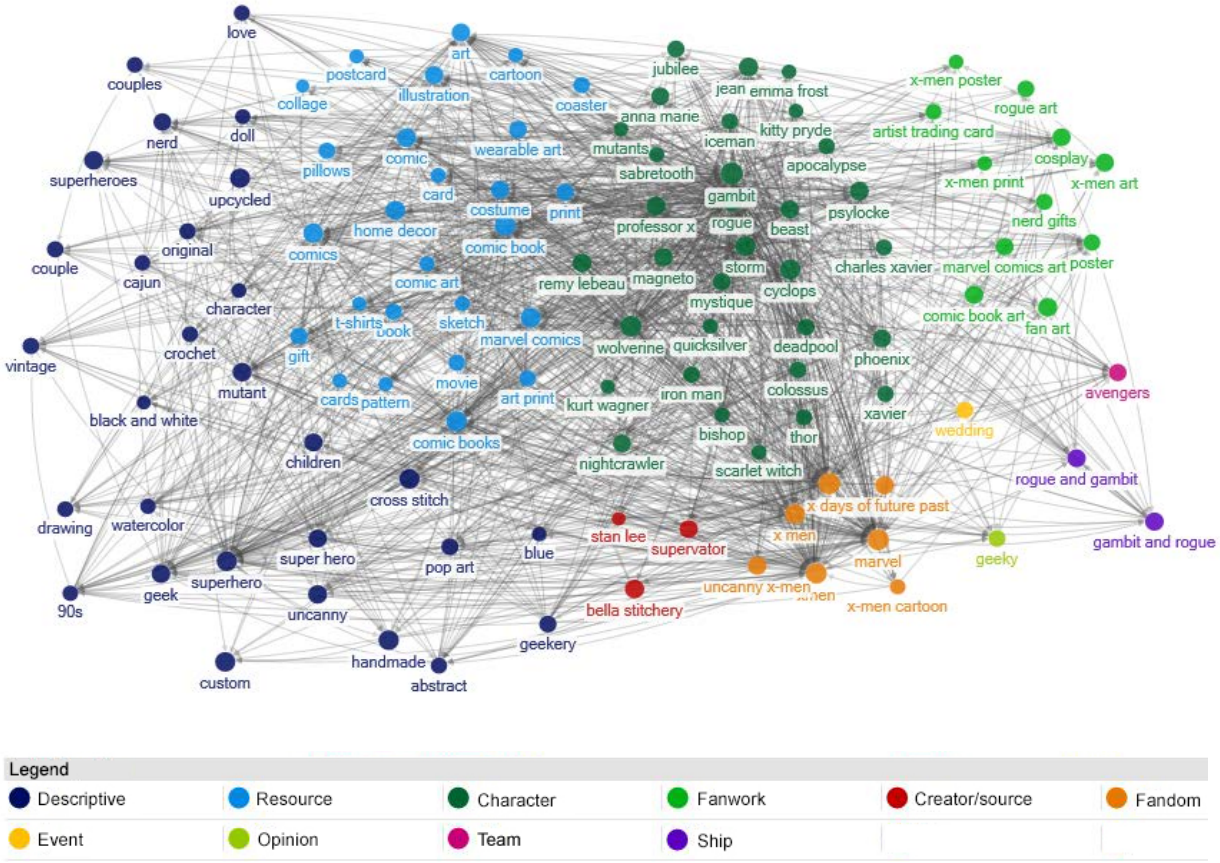


Figure 48: Co-occurrence graph for the 'Rogue and Gambit' tag on Etsy. All displayed tags have a betweenness centrality of 1+.

Nevertheless, it is interesting to see that the **Ship** element of this dataset co-occurs with other more generic terms such as 'couples', 'love' and 'wedding'. This point suggests that **Ship** sub-type tags might be used to sell fanworks targeted at couples.

Looking at Figure 49, it appears that the tag usage is heavily skewed to **Descriptive** and **Resource** type tags. Resource type tags are used at a far lower frequency on Tumblr and AO3 (see Figure 36 and 43). This suggests that on Etsy most of the tags are used to describe the material attributes of individual items on sale, thus increasing potential buyer traffic (Olbrich and Holsing 2011, have shown that tag usage on e-marketplaces increases buyer click-throughs). For example, if a buyer is specifically looking for earrings depicting her favourite characters, Rogue and Gambit, she is likely to search by the keywords "earrings" + "Rogue and Gambit". Logically, the seller increases the likelihood of selling her Romy-themed earrings if she tags them with these very keywords. This would account for the mundanity of many

keywords in the Etsy dataset which describe formal characteristics, such as item type (“fabric blocks”, “postcard”), material used (“pencil”, “vinyl”), colour (“brown”, “black and white”) and size (“3 5”, indicating 3.5 inches).

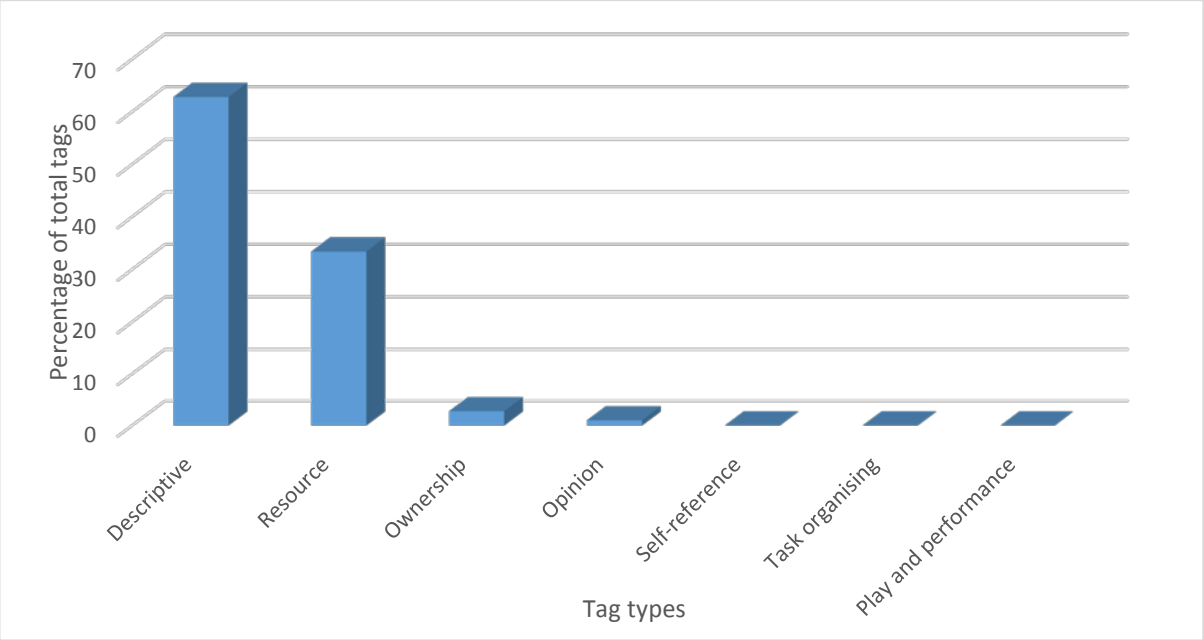


*Figure 49: Percentage of Etsy tag usage by type (see Table 15, section 5.8 for tag types). **Descriptive** and **Resource** tag types dominate this set.*

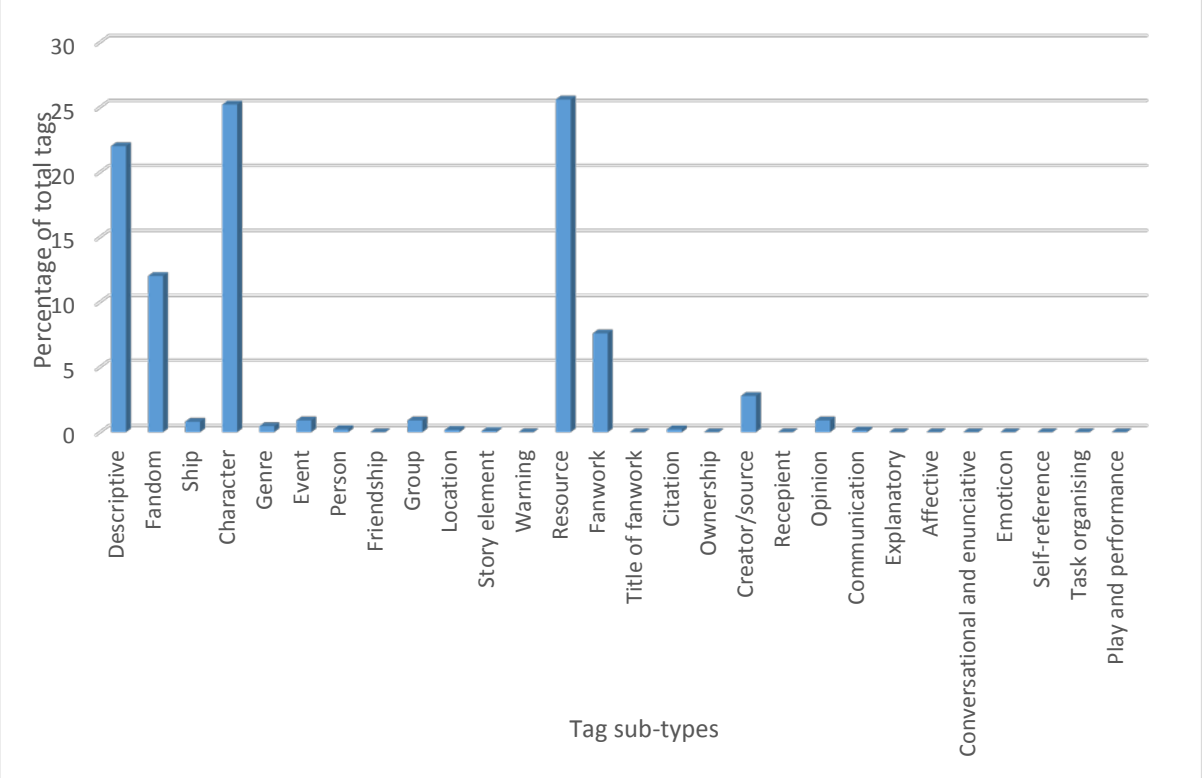


*Figure 50: Percentage of Etsy tag usage by sub-type (see Table 15, section 5.8 for tag types). The bulk of **Descriptive** tag sub-type usage is the **Character** sub-type.*

Figure 50 shows the lack of granularity seen in the Etsy tags – there is very little use of tag sub-types. The only sub-type that saw significant usage was the **Character** sub-type. Despite this, it can be seen that there was a slight rise in the use of the **Creator/Source** tag sub-type. This sub-type was most utilised on items such as art prints and individual comic issues, where potential buyers might be looking for the work of certain artists or creators that they are collecting. As with **Character** and **Fandom** sub-types, the **Creator/Source** sub-type serves to highlight the visibility of a certain item to the 'right' buyer. Unlike Tumblr and AO3, in this case, the **Creator/Source** sub-type does *not* appear to fulfil the function of acknowledging or crediting the original creator per se.

An interesting phenomenon was noticed, in which several items were given tags that did not specifically refer to the item on offer, but described characters or fandoms *peripherally* related to the actual characters or fandoms represented in the item. Figure 51 shows an example of such an item from the Etsy dataset. The item is a sticker or decal depicting the symbol of an X-Men character named Phoenix; this symbol is worn on her costume. In addition to the 'Rogue' and 'Gambit' tags attached to this item, the following tags were used: 'sticker', 'costume', 'avengers', 'iron man', 'incredible hulk', 'black widow', 'thor', 'quicksilver', 'scarlet witch' and 'wolverine'. In this example, only two tags accurately describe the item – 'sticker' and 'costume' respectively. None of the other tags were relevant, most of them describing characters from the Avengers fandom[66]. An explanation of this may be that, at the time of the Etsy data scrape (June 2016), the second Avengers film, *Avengers: Age of Ultron* (2015) was still very popular, and tagging items with characters from the film might bring more traffic to that item and therefore boost potential sales.

Twenty-three out of the 174 posts in the Etsy dataset (13%) were tagged in this way. This is in contrast to the tagging practices evidenced on Tumblr and AO3, which demonstrated

[66] The X-Men and the Avengers are both properties of Marvel Worldwide Inc., and are part of the Marvel Universe. There is therefore some overlap between the two franchises and their respective fandoms.

a great concern for tag accuracy, in AO3 particularly to the point of extremely high granularity. This would imply that the motivations for tagging on Etsy are different to Tumblr and AO3 – namely that on the latter, tagging is driven by a desire to accurately describe an item and the affective impact of it; whereas in the former, it is driven – at least partly – by a desire to increase sales. This is also reflected by the complete lack of **Communication** and **Play and Performance** tag types in the Etsy dataset, which further serves to validate the idea that tagging on Etsy is not intended for social or community purposes, as might be seen on Tumblr and AO3. Zollers (2007), in a paper that looked at tagging on Amazon, noted that:

> The consumption centric system creates a different dynamic between the users and the system [compared to social media sites], and perhaps elicits new motivations for tagging since the users are no longer tagging the content that they produce, but rather predefined content already available on the site (n.p.).

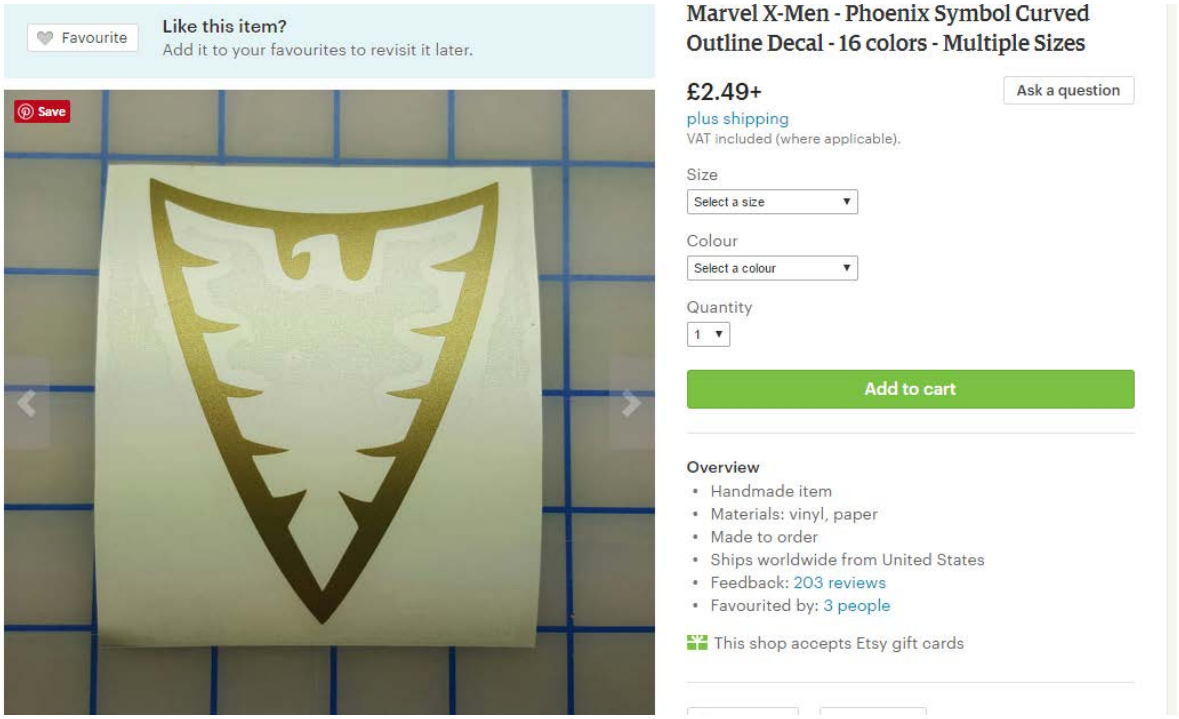


Figure 51: Phoenix symbol curved outline decal, on sale on Etsy. Source: https://www.etsy.com (retrieved 24 December 2016).

Etsy, whilst also an online marketplace like Amazon, implements a different tagging system in that sellers may tag their own work. But I would contend that it is also a 'consumption-centric' tagging system, and that the taggers, whilst fans on the one hand, are also concerned with selling their wares; and therefore their motivations are less concentrated on the organisational or communicative aspects of tagging, but on its commercial aspects, e.g. increasing visibility. This is not to say that such motivations are not present when there is no monetary gain to be made from tagging one's work, but to suggest that monetary gain likely enhances it. In this way Etsy sellers – in the Romy fandom at least, put probably also in other fandoms – find their tagging practices are motivated not only by their fan identities, but also by *their primary purpose in being on the Etsy site*, *which is to sell their fanworks.*

This theory is also borne out by the interviews with the two Etsy sellers conducted for this case study. For example, referring to her tagging practices, Participant E (who sells cross stitch patterns of characters from many fandoms) said:

> I use [tags] with every listing and try to have some which are broad – like "cross stitch" and "geeky" – and some which are more specific – like my shop name and the names of the characters in the pattern – in hopes of capturing the attention of as many customers as possible.

Whilst her tagging appears to be sales-driven, Participant E nevertheless considers herself a fan:

> I've always considered our patterns as fanart – a way for us to celebrate the movies, shows, books, and comics that we love so much. We're working in a medium which certainly isn't traditional in the fanart community, but that doesn't make it any less relevant.

And:

> Yes, I am a fangirl […] Being a fan has certainly influenced the business from both directions though – it's not just our own passions that dictate what we design, but those of our customers too – we've had so many requests for shows and movies and comics that we ourselves weren't initially familiar with, that we just had to get to know those franchises too.

This suggests that a clear dichotomy is present in these sellers' tagging motivations – the languages of business and fandom are *both* present. Moreover, there does not appear to be any conflict between their fan and business identities. Both identities seem to be equally strong. Participant E even embraces the participatory aspects of fandom whilst selling items for her business – she takes requests (a notable characteristic of fandom's gift economy; see Jones 2014b), and even joins new fandoms in order to learn enough about them to do her products justice. Moreover, she doesn't consider those products as products per se, but as fanworks.

Participant F, who owns a store that sells corsets patterned with fan motifs, showed a similar approach as Participant E to tagging her products, saying that when she tags "I try to think about what is most culturally relevant to my product and market on what I think my buyers are looking for", which, one assumes, is what most sellers do. Yet, also in common with Participant E, she felt that being a fan influenced her identity as a seller:

> I feel like being a fan of the properties that I'm making inspired pieces by helps me to know what another fan would want to buy. It provides more passion and inspiration of the works if I'm a part of the fandoms like I'm pulling from.

It is clear here that, in these cases, fan identity is not wholly abandoned for business identity. These sellers see themselves as fans providing fanworks and collectibles to other fans, and pride themselves on knowing their audiences and what fans want to see, because they are fans themselves. This does seem to influence tagging behaviours, inasmuch as sellers who are fans share enough 'subcultural literacy' (Zollers 2007) with their intended buyers to effectively target fan-tags at them. Yet simultaneously much of their tagging behaviour is also commercially-driven, which is, after all the purpose of Etsy as an online marketplace. Therefore, the tagging strategies employed in this dataset are influenced in the main by the need to promote the consumption of products.

5.9. Discussion and conclusions

When comparing the three datasets, several points of similarity can be seen. On all three sites, **Descriptive** tag types are the most popular, reiterating the primary function of tags as descriptors of a resource's content. Figure 52 clearly indicates this – the **Descriptive** tag type sees the highest usage on all three sites and all datasets. Of the **Descriptive** type, the **Character** sub-type was, in the main, the most popular (see Figure 53), presumably as this would most effectively direct audiences to resources featuring the fan characters they were most interested in viewing.

Likewise, all three platforms showed lowest usage in the **Self-Reference**, **Task Organising** and **Play & Performance** types. Of all the tag types, these three also present little granularity, and during the analysis did not require further division into sub-types. This would imply that – in the Romy fandom at least – these tag types serve more specialised (and comparatively little-used) functions.

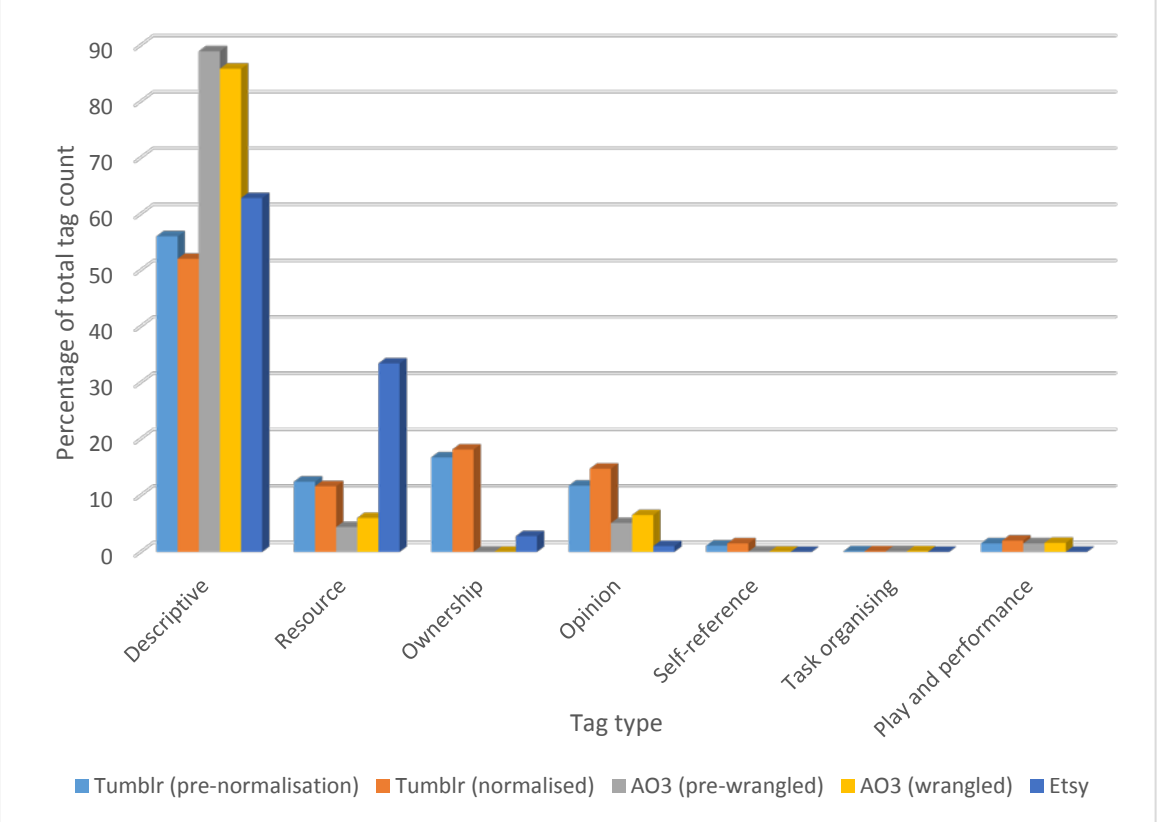


Figure 52: Comparison of the total tag count by type, across the three platforms scraped (see Table 15, section 5.8 for tag types). ***Descriptive*** *tag types were the most frequently used across all datasets.*

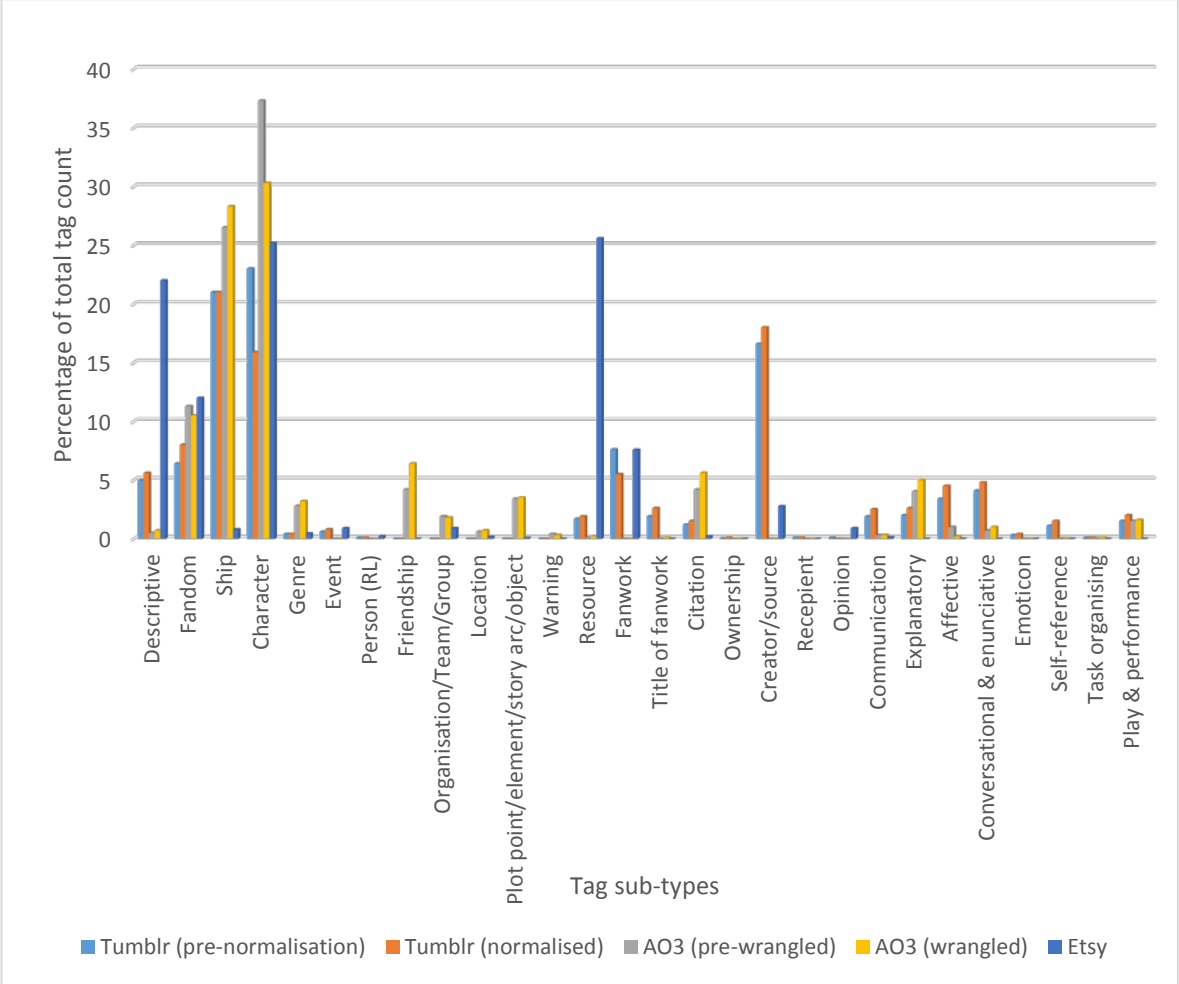


*Figure 53: Comparison of the total tag count by sub-type, across the three platforms scraped (see Table 15, section 5.8 for tag types). The **Character** sub-type (a **Descriptive** tag sub-type) was most frequently used in all datasets, apart from Etsy, where the **Resource** tag type saw slightly more usage than the **Character** sub-type.*

There were, however, significant differences between the three sites studied. These are detailed below.

5.9.1. Tumblr

Tumblr shows a higher incidence of **Ownership** and **Opinion** tag types in comparison to the other sites. Whilst Participant A, as an aggregator of Romy-related fanworks, used the **Ownership** tag type heavily to credit sources, when her posts were removed from the dataset there was still heavy use of this type by other users, suggesting a strong culture within the Romy fandom of crediting other peoples' work. Indeed, Participant A mentioned in her interview that,

> [s]ome people are inconsiderate by not posting the creator's name when it comes to fan works, but over time, most posters learn that it's a Tumblr faux-pas.

And Participant B also noted how important this culture of crediting is within the Romy community:

> I know of one poster who makes a point of sharing the art/post directly from the original poster (as a sign of respect). As far as a lack of respect, I've also frequently seen works reposted with no link back to the original artist/writer. There are two people I follow who become incensed whenever this happens to their own work.

We can surmise that since Tumblr thrives on a basic function of reposting the works of others, a culture has grown within many of its communities – a form of netiquette if you will – that makes it best practice to credit the source of the original post, effectively signalling that '*I am not the creator of this fanwork – someone else is*'. AO3 and Etsy have no reposting function; the post's author is an inherently visible attribute of that post, and therefore there is no need for **Ownership/Source** type tags to be applied on these platforms.

The use of the **Communication** tag sub-type, rarely used on other platforms, highlights Tumblr as a site for the novel use of tagging, that is, as a form of creative expression in itself, as a form of engagement with other users in its own right, or as a means of communicating with other fans. It is notable, therefore, that only interviewees from Tumblr talked explicitly about using this type of tag:

> More often than not I use the tags to voice personal opinions so I don't ruin the aesthetic of the original post (Participant B).

> I occasionally make a smart-ass remark in the tags, instead of having as [sic] permanent commentary (Participant A).

Nevertheless, it is worth remembering that when Participant A's posts were removed from the Tumblr dataset, all **Communication** tag sub-types saw an increase in the percentage of overall tags. She explains:

> I don't put any commentary in the tags, as I would do sometimes for professional works, because I don't want to influence the end user's opinion of the work. (Participant A)

As an aggregator of Romy posts, Participant A felt that her purpose was not to write commentary on the resource, but merely to describe it or credit its creator; only sparingly did she pass a "smart-ass remark". However, her account showed good evidence of the **Conversational & Enunciative** tag sub-type (meaning that the tag flagged a resource as a two-way dialogue between two users). Part of the account's function is to run a question-and-answer service – anyone can ask a question about the character Rogue, and Participant A will answer it, tagging it with '#questionsanswered'. An example of this type of post is in Figure 54. Other questions may be encyclopaedic in nature, and in such cases Participant A will use this format to share her extensive knowledge of Rogue and her backstory with other fans[67].

What is striking about Tumblr's examples of fan-tagging is the discursive and playful ways in which they are used. In his 2009 paper, Monnin highlighted the ludic aspects of tagging, using Flickr as an example of how Web 2.0's technological affordances have blurred the line between work and play. For Monnin, sites like Flickr (which began life as a massively multiplayer online game called *Game Neverending*) are spaces where "a user's browsing trails are leveraged to generate a singular gaming experience by transforming any casual task, any toilsome effort – or rather the data they leave behind, into playful actions" (Monnin 2009, p.2). Monnin calls Flickr and other similar sites that use collaborative tagging, such as Google Image Labeler and Yahoo! VideoGameTag, "ludic computer-human interfaces… transforming senseless tasks… into entertaining and enjoyable meaningful actions while operating at a completely different level to perform a desired task" (p.3).

[67] An excellent example of an encyclopaedic type question-and-answer post by Participant A is their Tumblr post, *'So I was reading X-Men Legacy and in one part…'* (9 June 2015). Due to its image-intensive content it is not reproduced here. The post reveals an intimate knowledge of the Romy fandom and the exact panels from various comic books in answering a fans very specific question. The tags used show an interesting mixture of tag (sub-)types: '#questionsanswered' (**Conversational & Enunciative**), '#Romy' (**Ship**), and '#sorry not sorry about the Minnesota crack' (**Affective**). The final tag is one of the few where Participant A makes one of her "smart-ass remarks".



Figure 54: A 'Questions Answered' Tumblr post by Participant A. The tags used are "#questionsanswered" and "#Romy" (retrieved 24 December 2016).

This is exactly the sort of phenomenon witnessed on sites such as Tumblr and AO3, where fantagging is consistently used in playful and creative ways. As well as being descriptive, they can be expressive and dialogic, or symbolic and visual, reminding us, as Monnin says, that "tags are not, and never were, mere words" (p.4).

This calls to mind Celia Pearce's (2011) communities of play (see p.15), which came together around ludic activities based upon the affordances of open-world, sandbox games. In this case, we might describe fans as the communities of play, and Tumblr and AO3 as the sandboxes from whose technological affordances ludic activities such as fan-tagging are born, and information is creatively exchanged. Despite this, little has been said in the literature about the communicative and dialogic aspects of Tumblr hashtags; as far as the author knows,

this practice of using tags to engage in conversation and other two-way modes of communication is unique to Tumblr. Further exploration on this function of Tumblr hashtagging would be of great interest.

Both interviewees were of the opinion that the tagging system could be improved, and most of their objections centred on problems with searching and homonymous terms, as there is currently no function to filter tags:

> Take the tag "Rogue," for instance. While I may be looking for an X-Men character, many other things come up: an anime character, crossfit gear, roleplaying character class, and non-English versions of Harry Potter […] The aforementioned issues when searching through common terms could be aided by having a way to exclude other words. There have also been issues with spam, where completely incorrect tags were applied by spambots and they brought up disturbing results. Manually blocking all of those spambots was irritating (Participant A).

> I would like to be able to see the collected tags from all posters in the same place instead of clicking on each repost and reading their tags. (Participant B)

These responses give some idea of the trade-off Tumblr users must pay for the free use of tags on the site. Whilst users are able to use tags in uninhibited and creative ways, the lack of formal, bibliographic and taxonomic control makes information retrieval challenging. There is no way to filter results; there is a great deal of redundancy (reblogs of a single post can be reduplicated in a search), and, as mentioned above, some tags are not even indexed by the system. This is in contrast to both AO3 and Etsy, where various controls of the folksonomy have been put into place.

5.9.2. Archive of Our Own (AO3)

AO3 had the highest tag usage of the three platforms, taking nearly half (47%) of the total combined individual tag count. AO3 tagging practices show a very high density and well-defined granularity, as authors attempt to convey the minute particulars of their fandom, as well as the plots of their stories. Fans are known to be particular about the types of fanworks they will engage with (Driscoll 2006; Hollylime n.d.), showing preference according to characters, ships, genres and kinks (i.e. the sexual predilections depicted in fanfic). All these

elements and more become vitally important, both for the audience, who wishes to find a fic that matches her preferences as precisely as possible, and for the creator, who wishes to draw as large an audience as possible to her work. Because of this, tagging – on AO3 in particular – becomes an important finding aid, similar to the subject headings found in library catalogues, except that they are far more granular and far more numerous.

Whilst there is the unique practice of 'tag wrangling' on AO3, this did not seem to affect the overall meaning or sense of the original tags used. Tag wranglers in Marvel fandom appeared to have an in-depth expertise in their area, and, judging by the marked similarity between the pre- and post-wrangled AO3 datasets, they were for the most part correctly able to interpret and maintain the sense of the original tags. Indeed, the tag wranglers appeared to be very dedicated to this mission, and to preserving the authenticity of the original tags:

> The Ao3 Terms and Conditions and the Wrangling First Principles both strictly prevent us from being gatekeepery. We can't change tags, we can't tell users how to tag in any official capacity ("describe not proscribe"). Our goal is to organize tags in a way that fans will be able to find what they're looking for. To do that, we have to speak their language and use the words they use. (Participant C)

> One of the most important principles of tag wrangling is that we don't alter a user's tags. The beauty of the AO3's system is that everyone can tag for whatever they want, in exactly the format they want. As well, most large fandoms have multiple wranglers assigned to them, and that means that there has to be a general consensus on how to handle any given tag that is for some reason challenging, or requires a judgement call of some kind. (Participant D)

In fact, these tag wranglers strongly felt that tag wrangling was a form of produsage, of participatory culture, even a type of fanwork in itself, a way of giving back to the community:

> Tag wrangling is a way I can contribute to a community that I love. I like this kind of work and, with the decline of livejournal, I felt less connected to the community and less like I was pulling my own weight. Wrangling both lets me meet people from across fandom and help out (Participant C).

> I consume a great many fanworks in my day to day life, but I don't really create that many. Tag wrangling is a way that I can feel as though I give something back to the community that has

brought me so much joy (Participant D).

Both interviewees rejected the idea that they were gatekeepers within their fandom. Participant C even went so far as to say "I don't think of myself as a gatekeeper, mostly because I hate that word". Despite this, I would contend that tag wranglers *are* information gatekeepers in the sense that they are "shaping, emphasizing, or withholding" information, or the flow of information (Case 2012, p.339). This is with the caveat that they do not appear to be *actively* or *intentionally* withholding or emphasizing certain aspects of information within their fan community. Rather, they are shaping it in the sense of streamlining its flow, of facilitating greater access to it. This is supported by the fact that far more co-occurring tags in this dataset had a higher betweenness centrality when compared to the other sites, meaning that more tags on AO3 acted as points of information exchange than on Tumblr and Etsy. In essence, tags on AO3 were more effective bearers of information than on the other sites investigated. One might deduce, therefore, that AO3's tag wranglers, and by extension Bullard's (2014) 'curated folksonomy', are a very effective method for mitigating the less predictable effects of online tagging.

Further investigation, incorporating the views of AO3 users, would be interesting on this point. This would allow for a comparison between usage of AO3's tagging system and that of Tumblr and Etsy. As mentioned in the previous section, users of Tumblr felt that there was improvement to be made on the site in terms of information retrieval. AO3 exerts more control on its tagging system, although one might consider it an 'invisible control', as on the surface the tags themselves are not changed, but merged under a parent tag. The tag wranglers interviewed had positive views on the tagging system, especially considering the "insane strain it's under" (Participant C). Participant C felt that the filtering system could be better streamlined in order to increase retrieval accuracy. Participant D was largely satisfied with the system, but felt the "most changes that could be proposed would have more to do with changes in policy":

> For example, there are an unfortunate number of tags floating about that can't be wrangled because users entered them in the wrong field, but if you put "Tony Stark" in the Fandom field, we can't make it a synonym of Tony Stark the character tag. Changing the type of a given tag is changing what a user entered in a way that we don't do as a matter of policy, and it's a policy I have to agree with.

This is very indicative of the trade-off between 'messiness' and control that is so often seen in folksonomic systems (Smith 2008a). Whilst AO3 suffers in some ways from maintaining this balancing act, on the whole it seems to be maintaining that balance successfully. It would be interesting to learn whether this system is also successful from the point of view of the user.

5.9.3. Etsy

Etsy appears to share a lot in common with other online marketplaces when one observes the tagging practices of Romy fans there. For example, the retail site Amazon shows minimal tagging activity in comparison to sites such as LibraryThing, because "the tagging feature is not given much prominence […]. Additionally, the main purpose of the site is commercial and not organizational, so users might not be as motivated to tag content" (Zollers 2007, n.p.). Etsy's percentage of the total tag count, across all three platforms studied, was comparable to Tumblr's (they were 27% and 26% respectively; AO3's sat at 47%). This indicates that despite the low prominence of tags on the Etsy site (i.e. at the bottom of a post's page), and despite the in-built limit to the number of tags that could be used per resource, users still made as much use of that limit as they could. Indeed, one of the interviewees was of the opinion that a higher cap on tags was the only improvement that Etsy could incorporate:

> It would be nice to have a few more tags - sometimes 13 just doesn't seem enough. 20 tags per listing would be wonderful! (Participant E)

It is certainly possible that if a higher cap was implemented it would be used, not least because more keywords would maximise the visibility of a resource to potential audiences.

Notably, this was the only point of dissatisfaction mentioned in the interviews – Etsy's tagging system therefore seems to work well for the commercial purposes it serves.

Whilst Etsy, in common with Tumblr and AO3, shows heavy usage of the **Description** tag type, there is far less evidence of fandom-related sub-types when compared to the two other sites. Instead there is a much heavier reliance on generic **Description** and **Resource** tags. Of fandom-related sub-types, the most-used is the **Character** sub-type. Outside of these 2 tag types, other tag type usage is minimal in this dataset. There is some use of **Ownership** tag types, particularly in references to artists/creators, but also in indicating the Etsy store name itself. Other tag type usage is negligible.

Overall, tag usage on Etsy points towards both functional and commercially-driven use. Whilst fan-tagging does exist, its primary function seems to be to draw in the appropriate buyers (i.e. other fans). This type of tagging is always supplemented by generic tags describing the basic characteristics of a resource; and there is also significant use of 'peripheral' tags, or tags that do not describe the fandom represented in the resource, but fandoms peripheral to it (see p.264. This could be seen as a strategy to maximise the potential audience and/or buyer pool, and, as Blanchflower and Hodges (2014) remind us, "strategically tagging an item and giving it a clear title, along with providing clear product images, are the factors that are required for a seller's shop to succeed" (p.819). It would seem that this is a tactic that fans have also learned to employ when selling their fanworks on Etsy.

Despite this, Participant E felt a deep connection to her fan audience, and that her store was driven in part by it:

> […] it's not just our own passions that dictate what we design, but those of our customers too - we've had so many requests for shows and movies and comics that we ourselves weren't initially familiar with, that we just had to get to know those franchises too. Without customers urging us to check out shows like Supernatural and Sherlock, we never would have designed those patterns and become fans of those shows too. (Participant E)

What this suggests is that, at least in this case, there is a kind of symbiosis between the seller and buyer, and that the gift economy that is seen in many fan communities has been transferred in part to the online marketplace. But this hybridisation should perhaps not surprise us, since fan culture itself is driven by commercial culture (the need to consume and collect official fan goods and artefacts) as it is by transformative culture (the need to create and share fanworks based on those goods). As Jones (2014a) opines:

> […] it is not simply the binary of commodity culture and gift economy that work with (or against) each other […F]an culture itself is influenced by two opposing sets of values that dominate the cultural field and that fans take positions in line with: cultural value based on the profit motive, and cultural production for its own sake—that is, the gift economy (2.6).

Participant E's response implies that this influence from two opposing forces is not a personal source of tension for her; Participant F did not mention any such tension either. It may well be the opposite in other cases. These findings are backed up in part by Cherry's (2016) recent study of fan fabric artists who also sell their work:

> As an independent dyer, [the seller] can incorporate her fan interests into her business, but as a fan she can "geek out" with other fans […] The sense in which the two sides are both part of a shared fan community […] can lead to the dyer and the customers feeling as though they share the bond of the fan community rather that it straightforwardly being a commercial transaction (p.171).

And:

> Such shared love of the text between the dyer and her customers is indicative of [a] hybrid market environment in which there is no clear distinction between social and commercial economies […] Furthermore, the social network influences both production and consumption within the fan-knitting community (p.171).

It would be interesting to see whether this 'hybrid market economy' exists in other fan-seller spaces where there is "further breaking down [of] the customer-fan boundary" (Cherry 2016, p.171). Further interviews with other fan sellers on Etsy regarding this point may be worthwhile.

Lastly, the Etsy sellers interviewed showed an ambivalent attitude towards copyright and licensing, despite having an awareness of copyright issues. In the case of Participant F, there was an intimate awareness of these issues:

> There's actually a little known loophole when it comes to using licensed fabrics. Since you've already paid the licensing fee by purchasing the fabric, the company has already received a licensing fee for that product if it's a pre-printed fabric. There has actually been a lawsuit over this and the licensor lost, as they'd already received revenue from the product. I don't recall the name of the case, though, but it caused a splash in our community.

Cherry (2016, p.176) cites two similar cases, one where sellers on Etsy and eBay received cease and desist notices from the BBC after selling knitted *Doctor Who* adipose dolls, and the other from 20th Century Fox to knitters selling replicas of Jayne Cobb's hat from *Firefly.*

Despite this, Participant E didn't show much concern for copyright, saying "I've always considered our patterns as fanart" – as if proclaiming her work as fanart automatically precludes any accusation of copyright infringement. This is an erroneous assumption (Johnson 2016), but it is one that many producers of fanworks agree with, led perhaps by the notion that they are part of a moral economy (i.e. respecting the original creator whilst assuming a right to appropriation – see Postigo 2008), a perception that "their endeavours [are] important social work" (Lantagne 2014, p.302), a sense of 'safety in numbers', or a "a lack of knowledge" or "confusion about copyright law" (Fiesler, Feuston and Bruckman 2015). When asked whether she thought that other fans disapproved of her selling fanworks because of copyright, Participant E responded:

> In my experience I don't think fans worry too much about the copyright laws. They're definitely more concerned that the fanworks are true to the characters and the franchise. If the fanwork is honest and a fair representation of the story/characters that's really what's important.

Participant F's reply mirrored that of Participant E:

> I don't think fans care, because the fans want to see more products of their fandom out there. And licensing is hard to come by and so expensive that your average creator and crafters on Etsy don't have the ability to license 100,000 pieces from the intellectual property. Licenses only work when mass-producing, and don't work as well for small runs or custom creations.

Here Participant F makes an important point – that intellectual property, as it currently stands, does not adequately serve small businesses, or indeed fans, or communities that consider themselves a part of the Maker Movement. Whilst people selling fanworks on Etsy and other online stores risk the possibility of legal action from license owners, perhaps there is a feeling on their part that the licensing laws are so antiquated and irrelevant to what they do that they choose to ignore them. Perhaps we can suggest that a new paradigm on intellectual property would be beneficial in making licensing and copyright a relevant issue to these communities.

5.9.4. Summary

The following table gives an overview of the findings of the case studies, as related to the proposed objectives outlined in Section 5.1.

Objective	Findings
1. To investigate the ways in which fans use tags to organise and share fanworks and information on online.	• Tags are generally used to describe a resource to a perceived fan audience. • Fan folksonomies show high granularity in order to more effectively facilitate the classification, sharing and finding of fanworks. • On Tumblr, there is little folksonomic control, which can hinder information search and retrieval. • On AO3, tag wranglers help implement and manage a 'curated folksonomy', 'canonising' or merging user tags in order to enable more effective searching and information retrieval, but also preserving the idiosyncrasy and meaning of the original tag. • There is a strong culture of crediting other peoples' fanworks on sites like Tumblr. • Tags can be used to organise personal information and fanworks, e.g. marking posts as works-in-progress, or as an addition to a Tumblr queue (to be posted at a later date).
2. To investigate the ways in which fans use tags to communicate with one another online.	• To give opinions on a resource. • To explain the resource's content. • To explain creative decisions, when the tagger is the resource creator. • To express emotional reactions to resources, or to explain an emotion that inspired a resource's creation. • To instigate or respond to a dialogue with another fan. • To visually embody affect via emoticons.

3. To investigate how fans act as information intermediaries and gatekeepers online.	• Some fans aggregate and share works publicly with other fans. • Some fans create Q&A fora online. • Tag wranglers shape information flows on AO3, streamlining fan folksonomies, facilitating access to information/fanworks, by working *collaboratively* with other fans.
4. To investigate the practices and attitudes of fans who sell fanworks online.	• Tagging on Etsy is mainly strategic and commercially-driven. • Sellers see themselves as fans, both providing a service to and inspired by other fans. • Elements of a participatory gift economy can be seen on Etsy, e.g. Participant E allows herself to take on requests and be influenced by her customers' fandoms, indicating a 'hybrid market economy'. • There is an ambivalence towards or unconcern for copyright and intellectual property issues.

Table 24: Case study findings, linked to the case study objectives.

The following table gives an overview of the findings of the case studies, as related to the thesis objectives outlined on p.9.

Objectives of thesis	Impact areas	Case study findings
1. To better understand the information behaviour of a unique group of people and therefore better plan information services and/or architectures.	**1.** Library and information professions	• Fans use tags to organise fan resources, but they also use them in affective and dialogic ways. • Fans create their own taxonomies and employ them as tags. • Fans show a strong culture of crediting the works of others. • There is a strong collaborative and participatory element to the ways in which fans engage with information. • Uncontrolled tagging systems enable highly creative tagging uses, but inhibit effective information searching and retrieval.
2. To investigate fanwork collections, their place as cultural products, and how fans create, disseminate, promote, organise, access and preserve them.	**1.** Library and information professions	• Fan-created folksonomies show high granularity in order to more effectively facilitate sharing and finding of fanworks. • The practice of 'tag wrangling', a type of 'curated folksonomy' (Bullard, 2014), is an efficient method for managing folksonomies, and can increase levels of information exchange via tagging. • Some fans aggregate and share works publicly with other fans. • Some fans create Q&A fora online. • Fans are generous and tend to share specialist knowledge freely, e.g. tag wranglers do not see themselves as gatekeepers but more as facilitators to finding knowledge. • Semi-controlled tagging systems work well in a commercially-driven setting. • Semi-controlled tagging systems are run by fans, and are successful at increasing information exchange, but can be labour-intensive to run. • Uncontrolled tagging systems enable highly creative tagging uses, but inhibit effective information searching and retrieval.
3. To explore whether fan information behaviour can be generalised to, and whether it can inform other domains, including LIS, the publishing and media industries, education, and copyright law.	**1.** Copyright **2.** Publishing **3.** Media industry	• Fans who sell their work use information sharing strategies that are largely driven by commercial incentives. • Fans who sell their work see themselves as fans, both providing a service to and inspired by other fans. • Elements of the gift economy show some incorporation into the commercial practices of fan sellers. • There is an ambivalence towards or unconcern for copyright and intellectual property issues.

Table 25: Summary of case study findings, linked to thesis objectives and impact areas.

6. PART SIX – Conclusions

The main aim of this thesis was to explore the information behaviour of fans. This is a very broad remit given the size and complexity of fandom and fan studies. Nevertheless, the relative scarcity of literature on fan information behaviour means that in order to create a picture of its general nature, a broad approach is required. Throughout this thesis, several broad strokes have been drawn, delineating the various strands of fan information behaviour uncovered by the literature review and empirical studies undertaken. The findings of this thesis were achieved through the novel use of three methods, which are as follows:

- *Literature analysis:* A survey of the LIS and fan studies literature for examples of fan information behaviour had not previously been conducted. The literature review not only provides that survey, but also analyses and synthesises the literature to construct the most complete picture of fan information behaviour thus far.
- *Serious leisure Delphi study:* A new Delphi variant was devised, the 'Serious Leisure' Delphi. This variant differs from other Delphi studies, in its use of participants who are not experts in the traditional sense (i.e. professionally or academically qualified), but are nevertheless 'amateur' experts in their field. This type of variant would also be appropriate for use in studies of amateurs, hobbyists, enthusiasts, volunteers, and other 'pro-am' communities.
- *Tag analysis:* While tag analysis has been used in studies of informetrics, webometrics, and other similar domains within LIS, it has so far not been used to examine information behaviour. This thesis presents a potential method for using tag analysis as a way to understand information behaviour.

This section outlines the conclusions of the thesis; the impact of the research within LIS and other domains; recent developments in the literature; and suggestions for future work.

AIM

To explore the information behaviour of fans.

OBJECTIVES

1. To better understand the information behaviour of a unique group of people and thus to able to improve design of information services and/or architectures.
2. To investigate fanwork collections, their place as cultural products, and how fans create, disseminate, promote, access and preserve them.
3. To explore whether fan information behaviour can be generalised to, and whether it can inform, other domains, such as the publishing and media industries, education, and copyright law.

6.1. The information behaviour of fans

Throughout this thesis we have learned that fans are a unique group of information users whose information behaviours are worthy of investigation. These behaviours have much in common with those of hobbyist and serious leisure communities, such as those outlined in Case (2012, pp.336-338) and Hartel, Cox and Griffin (2016). There is are similarities between fans and these groups in several respects. These aspects have been outlined by Case (2012) and can be summarised as follows: the activities they engage in "are not paid work, yet may be work-like in the intensity with which they are pursued" (p.336); there is a strong emphasis put on informal information resources rather than formal ones; there is significant reciprocal information exchange between community members, and; communal information practices take precedence over individual ones. These are all traits that hobbyist communities share with fan communities.

What the literature on the information behaviour of hobbyists has failed to convince us of are the very aspects of fan communities that sets them apart. Fan communities, in addition to being Armstrong and Hagel's (2000) communities of transaction, interest, fantasy and relationship, are also communities of play (Mavridou 2016; Pearce 2011), interpretation (Busse and Gray 2011), participation (Jenkins [1992] 2013) and performance (De Kosnik 2016a). Whilst it cannot be assumed that hobbyist and enthusiast communities do not also fit into these types – and it would be imprudent to claim so – none of the LIS literature has so far attempted to link them together, or to investigate the way in which these types *influence information behaviour*. In other words, whilst LIS has, over the past decade, become increasingly interested in non-work information behaviour (Hartel, Cox and Griffin 2016), the research presented in *this* thesis seeks to push the boundaries of this further and explore information behaviour within the contexts of communities whose interests lie in more collaborative, immersive, participatory, passion-driven and pleasure-seeking contexts. What has been discovered here is that this type of community presents a *great* difference to those belonging to hobbyist, enthusiast and amateur communities. There is a greater evidence of participation, collaboration, generosity, creativity, deviance and even entrepreneurship than any of the serious leisure communities that have currently been studied in the field of LIS[68]. All these point to information behaviour that is very much of the 21st century, evident from its many forms including mass activism on social media, money-making via kickstarters and online marketplaces, and challenging intellectual property laws. It is my contention that fandom and fan communities encroach onto and affect these issues in ways that other serious leisure communities do not[69].

[68] This is not to say absolutely that these traits are not shared by other hobbyist or enthusiast communities, only that those that have been studied in the field of LIS thus far do not display them. Further research into the information behaviour of other hobbyist/amateur/enthusiast communities would therefore be welcome.

[69] It is worth reiterating here that the fans that have been discussed in this thesis should be considered as 'dedicated' fans rather than 'casual' ones (as discussed by Busse and Gray 2011).

It is therefore not surprising that there is no model of information behaviour that can be adequately applied to fans, although some do find applicability to various aspects of fan behaviour. What is clear from the research is that fan information behaviour shows a very strong symbiotic relationship between a) the information provider (franchise producers and creators), b) the information user (fans), and c) the information itself (the source text, fan news, fan trivia and fanworks). This symbiosis can, in some instances, be so strong that the information user can influence and affect the information provider and the information that that provider subsequently produces (see section 2.2.2.3). For instance, a contest held by Japanese games company Team Ninja will result in fanart being incorporated into the latest *Dead or Alive* game as extra costumes for the game's characters (Odoerfer 2015). Or polls conducted by entertainment company Marvel may result in a character being put on the roster of a superhero comics team when fans vote them in. This may then lead to other fans creating fanworks based on these actions, e.g. fanart of *Dead or Alive* characters in the fan-designed costumes, or fanfic about the Avengers starring the new character who has been voted onto the team. This phenomenon was also mentioned by the Delphi participants:

> I know of some artists who received such a fanbase of their own that it lead to job offers, and I know of at least one person who was actually hired by the producers of the franchise. (Delphi participant 6)

> […] there are certainly fandoms where the producers either tolerate, encourage or actively seek exchange with the fans, to the point of incorporating fandom ideas or memes in their products. (Delphi participant 1)

This virtuous cycle is important because not only does it fuel creativity and presumably financial gains on the part of the companies involved, but it also has the potential to (re)enter our global popular culture.

Another aspect that we see in fan information behaviour that is very different to that of other groups is an emphasis on what Hektor (2001) calls *dressing*. Dressing, as Hartel, Cox and Griffin (2016) succinctly put it, is "the putting of thoughts, emotions and images in words, texts, pictures, images and music, to be exchanged or imparted" (n.p.), and this is where fan

information behaviour finds its focus, and where its playful, passionate, interpretative, performative and participatory aspects find their expression. What this thesis has explored and hopefully demonstrated is that this emphasis on the dressing of information is a feature that, as far as can be ascertained from the literature thus far, is a uniquely emphasised information activity within fan communities.

What is most clear from the Delphi study in particular is that fans do not clearly demarcate their offline activity from their online activity. Their actions take place seamlessly across platforms and across the digital and analogue divide – where the information flows, they chase it. A fandom is built upon a source 'text' – a TV show, a movie, a comic, a book, a videogame, etc. Without the source, there is no fandom, and because of this the original text gains paramount importance within the information flow. In order to most accurately deconstruct, interpret and make sense of a text, a fan must first gain access to it. This may in the first instance be achieved through official sources, via mainstream channels and media. Fans count amongst their resources officially produced supplements to the official narrative, such as websites, magazine articles, synopses and trivia, encyclopaedic works which form the fandom's 'canon'. But surprisingly – or perhaps not so surprisingly – fans seem to favour encyclopaedic works created by other fans, such as fan-run websites, wikis or guides, which are often considered to be more comprehensive and to deliver more insight than the official sources might. In other words, fan resources are more informative than official ones (see p.205; also Bullard 2014; Adams 2009; also Appendix F, p.345, for the list of resources mentioned by Delphi participants).

These encyclopaedic works are essential to the understanding of the source narrative, and this understanding is vital in the creation of fanworks. Knowing and understanding a fandom's canon is of significance not merely because of the premium put on knowledge capital within fan communities, but because of the *authenticity* it imparts onto the fan's interpretation of that canon. The truer a fanfiction is to the characters, the more highly it is

valued. The more accurate and well-made a cosplay costume, the more it is admired. In fan communities, knowledge, and the authenticity of its application, equals esteem. Here, one sees the aspects of social and knowledge capital in fan communities – firstly, the *acquisition* of canon knowledge, which some fans choose to seek out, collect, ingest, organise and make sense of. Secondly is the *application* of canon knowledge in the creation of fanon, which is often (but not always) shared with other fans, and who may judge it, whether publicly or privately, for its authenticity. Thirdly, there is the *publishing* of both canon and fanon. In the case of canon, some fans may choose to publicly aggregate and publish the information and/or knowledge they have collected for the consumption of others, becoming, in effect, information gatekeepers. In the case of fanon, many fans will publish, present or perform fanworks, in both digital and analogue, also for the consumption of others. In a few cases, both types of fan output may be legitimised and incorporated into the source text by the original producers of that text – although fans are aware that, depending on the fandom that they belong to, the agency and influence they hold over the media industries may be marginal to none. Nevertheless, there does exist the possibility, albeit unlikely in most cases, for the gap in the loop to be closed, and for the information cycle to come full circle.

In light of this, several simple points can be proposed as part of a model of fan information behaviour:

1. The primary information source is the *source text*, which is usually provided by an official source and which forms the *canon* of the fandom e.g. *Star Wars*, *Pride & Prejudice, X-Men, Mass Effect, Frozen,* etc.
2. *Acquisition* of the canon is gained by fans through engaging with the source text, engaging with official, supplementary texts, engaging with non-official, fan-created supplementary texts, and engaging with the fan-created *fanon* (which, whilst not canon, may *inform* the canon in terms of promoting standards of *authenticity* and sense-making within the fan community).

3. *Organisation* of the canon, which would include the processing and management of the knowledge and information associated with it, and may include the application of fan-tags, fan genres and other forms of indexing, classification and categorisation, both analogue and digital.
4. *Application* of the canon, which may take encyclopaedic (canon) or transformative (fanon) forms, and which encompasses Hektor's (2001) concept of *dressing* information.
5. *Publication* of fanworks, whether encyclopaedic or transformative, in both analogue and/or digital form. Here the encyclopaedic might further serve as an information source in the creation of the transformative, as fans have been shown to favour informal, fan-created resources over official ones.
6. *Assimilation*, an optional stage, wherein fanworks may influence or be incorporated into the canon, or where it may demonstrate such levels of authenticity that it is either legitimised or elevated as a 'gold standard' within the fan community as fanon (Jalamo 2016; Liebler and Chaney 2007, p.6).

What any model of fan information behaviour must not fail to capture are the collaborative, creative, generous and performative activities that fans engage in. Any information provider or architect should take into account these factors and design services accordingly. In this regard, the following points can be made:

- Since there is a seamless blurring of what fans do on and offline, services should allow for the efficient integration and sharing of offline behaviour in online contexts (e.g. sharing photographs of cosplay costumes on a fan forum through a mobile device). This harkens back to Floridi's concept of 'onlife' (2015).
- Since the internet is a vital site for fan communication, social fora such as private messaging services or chatboxes should be considered.

- Amateur and fan-created information resources are favoured over official ones, and therefore systems should be in place to allow fans to add to those resources (e.g. wikis, blogs, etc.)
- Tagging is used by fans in a variety of ways – not merely for reasons of classification and organisation, but also for creative, affective and dialogic purposes. A tagging system should be flexible enough for fans to use it in any of these ways, but may be labour-intensive to run. Currently, AO3's tag wrangling system seems to be the most effective, having achieved a method for linking synonymous tags, which Lu, Zhang and He (2016, p.677), Chen and Ke (2013), and Rafferty (2010) have suggested as a desirable function for improving tag retrieval.
- There is a strong culture of acknowledging sources within fan communities, and therefore systems of crediting should be considered when building fan information architectures, such as always citing as source when reblogging a post, as is seen on Tumblr.
- Participation is vital to fan communities, from collaborating on writing fiction, to contests and special events, to mentorship of novice fans. Applications such as virtual sandboxes, video-conferencing, instant messaging, and other forms of cloud collaboration should be considered.
- Fan communities are social and make full use of social media-type functions, such as liking, following, reblogging, reposting, reviewing, commenting, leaving kudos, leaving hits, etc. These functions should be standard in any online platform being built for a fan community.
- Fan communities are playful, performative, and quick to learn new technologies. Services should be provided for them that are flexible, extensible, and easily modified. Open source resources might be considered. Fans usually have an idea of how best to present their work, once they have the tools to work with.

The final model of fan information behaviour can be seen in Figure 56 (p.319).

6.2. Fans and the information communication chain

The second objective of this thesis was to investigate fanwork collections and how they fit into the information communication chain (Robinson 2009; see also Figure 1, p.13) – that is, how are they created, disseminated, promoted, accessed, managed, preserved, etc. This section gives a summary of what we now understand of the fan information communication chain, given the findings of this research.

6.2.1. Creation

It has already been established that fanworks are archontic products (De Kosnik 2016a; Derecho 2006), that is, transformative cultural artefacts that remediate an original source text in various, multimodal ways. This in fact implies that there are two significant points of creation in the fan information communication chain – 1) the creation of the source text (or the canon) by media industry producers, and official information and news peripheral to the source text; 2) the creation of archontic fan texts, which are created by fans and do not necessarily imply canonicity. Of course, without the existence of point 1, there is no point 2 – the source text is the most important resource, as Delphi participants 1, 4, 10 and 16 specifically noted. This is not to minimise, however, the importance of archontic fanworks as creations. Some Delphi participants noted how fan-created resources were more important as informational sources – participants 9, 20, 26, 29 in particular named other fans and fanworks as the most important resource. It may also be the case that some fans are first drawn into a fandom by the output of other fans, as participant 19 noted, rather than by having experienced the source text first.

Within the fan community then, it would appear that both sources of creation hold equal importance – no matter that one is professionally and officially produced, whilst the other is produced by other fans, and usually in an amateur capacity. The source text is vital in

that without it, the information communication chain does not begin; but fanworks hold weight in their own right, both as creative, interpretative, transformative, affirmative cultural artefacts, and also as further sources of inspiration and informational content. These artefacts form the basis of fan culture, in that their creation is motivated by passion, fantasy and pleasure-seeking – even an erotic attachment to the source text (Vadde 2017). We might consider the creation of fanworks as a way of 'dressing' (as Hektor 2001 puts it) the source text, of playing with it, of exploring it. Therefore, the two points of creation within the fan information communication chain are 'sparked' from very different places. There is no doubt that creation of the source text takes precedence simply by its existence; the creation of fanworks is not only a point of *creation* within the chain, but it is also heavily tied to the information *use* stage of the chain, in that it is a product of information gleaned from the source text (see Figure 55, p.293).

Broadly speaking, there appear to be two types of fanworks – encyclopaedic (fact-based works, such as wikis, guides, rec lists, walkthroughs, etc.); and transformative (interpretative works, such as fanfic, fanart, etc.). These types appear to be gendered (see for examples De Kosnik 2016a, p.146), the encyclopaedic (or *affirmational* in the sense that they affirm and do not alter the source text) forms being mostly male-centred, and the transformative mostly female-centred. This adds another layer of motivation to the process of creation that is not sufficiently teased out in this study, although it was an area of contention in the third round of the Delphi study, and is important because it would lend some insight into gendered information practices and behaviour. It would, in light of this, be worth investigating in future research.

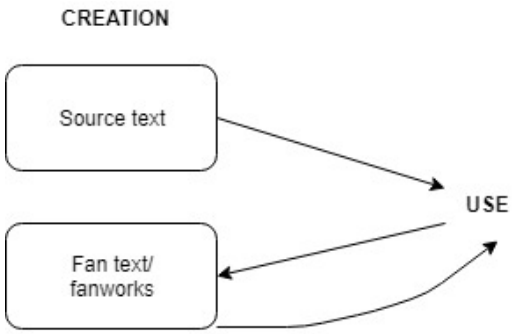


Figure 55: How the source text and the fan text fit into the information communication chain. The fan text makes use of the source text in its creation, but it is also used as an information source in its own right.

6.2.2. Organisation

Organisation of information covers both indexing and retrieval. To take indexing first, we have already seen how there are little to no official bibliographical standards existing for fanworks (Hart et al 1999). Fan communities, however, usually develop their own sophisticated and highly organised bibliographical and metadata standards. With fanfiction in particular, a highly granular and specific ontology has been inherited by fan communities over the years, one that is very much based in genre. These literary genres, such as *slash* (homoerotic fiction), *fluff* (romantic fiction) and *hurt/comfort* (a genre where one of a usually romantic pairing suffers and is comforted by the other) are long-standing and shared across many fandoms. These genres serve a dual purpose, both literary and rhetorical, inasmuch as not only do they signal a fanwork's content and, by extension, the affiliation of the creator to a certain mode of narrative form (whether that be textual or otherwise), but they also construct and *are* constructed by the group identity of the fan community (Hills 2013; Devitt 2004). In this case, genre is the basis of fan taxonomies, but it is also the basis of fan nomenclature, the way that the group names things – a *ship* is a romantic pairing; a *con* is a convention; a

ficathon is a type of fanfiction challenge. If you know these things, you belong to the community[70].

Fans will usually employ community-based ontologies when organising their fanworks; some sites, such as Fanfiction.net, employ their own limited choice of hierarchical categories and genres which users must choose when uploading their fanfiction. Other sites, like AO3, as we have seen, allow users to tag their fanworks with whatever they wish, using a mixture of auto-manual suggestions to guide tagging behaviour, and 'wrangling' popular tags by merging them with standard, parent ones. Yet other sites, such as Tumblr, allow completely free tagging, which affords more creative tagging practices, such as affective and conversational signalling. These practices, however, serve functions other than organisational (see section 5.9.1), and are therefore not suitable for retrieval purposes. Indeed, a few of the participants in the Delphi study had mixed reactions to the usefulness of tagging. For example, one participant stated:

> Tags can be unreliable. But sometimes it helps to know who's doing the tagging. Everyone tends to develop their own style. If you know this person tags this way, it's not unreliable. But if you're treating this person's tags according to that person's tagging style, you might have a problem (Delphi participant 17).

The idiosyncrasies of individual tagging can be eliminated by using the rigid hierarchies of sites such as Fanfiction.net or deviantART; alternatively, they can be mitigated by auto-manual tagging systems such as that seen on Etsy, or through hybrid systems such as AO3's tag wrangling. Some systems work better than others, and users tend to develop different strategies for working around the peculiarities of each one.

This research has focused mainly on the indexing of fanworks, rather than the source text. While some examples of source text indexing were investigated in the case studies,

[70] Perhaps the reason why fan taxonomies have remained stable for so long is that learning them is a form of 'initiation' into the fan community itself, and knowing the meanings of such terms implies inclusion in that community; but this is perhaps a theory to be set aside for further investigation.

especially on Tumblr, most of the works posted to the three sites explored – Tumblr, AO3 and Etsy – were fanworks. Where the source text was encountered (such as comic books, or comicbook panels), these were generally tagged with a citation (e.g. title of the work and the issue number), and the characters that starred in that work. What this suggests is that fandom is careful to cite the original work, but no strong conclusions can be made from this research alone – more research into the indexing practices of source texts would be therefore worthy of future research.

To turn now to retrieval methods, these are not easy to ascertain from the research done here. Simply from the case studies, which investigated only three websites through the prism of *fan-tagging*, each site employed different tagging systems which were used in very different ways. The one commonality between all three sites was resource description being the primary application for tags, presumably in order to facilitate retrieval purposes. From these three sites, we can extrapolate that fans employ a wide range of *ad hoc* methods for categorising and classifying fanworks and fan-related information, and that similar types of appropriation and/or adaptation of existing bibliographic methods may exist on other fan-created platforms. Again, more investigation into these matters will aid in achieving a more generalised picture. What *can* be surmised about the retrieval of fanworks and fan-related information is that the highly granular fan folksonomies currently in use seem to adequately cater to the very specific searches of fans. For instance, if one is searching for the fanfiction sub-genre *wingfic*, it is fairly easy to find a whole range of fiction based on this type, simply by going to AO3 and doing a tag search for *wingfic*. Clicking on the 'wingfic' tag will retrieve all the fanworks indexed under this genre (2488 at the time of writing). A simple Google search for 'wingfic' will retrieve works from AO3, Tumblr and Fanfiction.net in the top ten results. Finding a desired fanwork – even if it is obscure or part of the long tail of fandom – can be easy depending on the search capabilities of the fansite one is using.

6.2.3. Dissemination

For the past twenty years or so dissemination of these works has moved from analogue to digital forms (although still self-published) – the bulk of fanfiction, fanart and fanvids is now published online (Busse and Hellekson 2006, p.13); other fanworks, such as game mods, are born-digital and have digital-only applications, and are therefore disseminated solely on the internet. Some forms, such as cosplay and cosplay costumes, take place offline, but photos, reviews and accounts of these, and other offline fan events, are often captured digitally. At fan conventions fanworks are traded in physical formats such as fan comics, sketchbooks, stickers, badges, jewellery, and other paraphernalia. For the most part, however, dissemination now takes place online.

Some fans act as information gatekeepers (see p.16 for a definition), as some Delphi participants noted:

> I think dominant fan voices do also emerge and become sources of information. Such as in Cardiff when Doctor Who is filming there are certain 'key' fans who are sources of information on this. Likewise in theatre, when information about productions is released I know of certain 'key' fans for different theatres/performers etc who will have information. (Participant 15)
>
> In anime/manga fandoms, people with knowledge of japanese are often capable of collecting informations that are unaccessible to the majority of western fans and they spread those through the community, for the joy or dismay of other fans. (Participant 4)
>
> For example for one of the manga fandoms I follow there are two people that tweet/blog translations and updates (plus a group that translates) and most of the fans follow them and treat them as the main source for updates. (Participant 20)

These gatekeeper fans aggregate both fan-related information and fanworks, sharing them through a variety of methods. These might be fanzines, wikis, walkthroughs, guides, reclists, websites, etc. The Tumblr case study in section 5 gives an example of a user (Participant A) who acts as a gatekeeper or aggregator of the Romy fandom, sharing fanworks and information they have collected, pointing other fans towards their original sources, and hosting regular Q&A's. From the sheer amount of fan aggregators online, it would appear that

in their role as gatekeeper, fans tend to be more generous than traditional work- or profession-based gatekeepers might be perceived. Knowledge capital is the mark of a well-seasoned fan, and this by extension implies social capital. It therefore seems that fans are highly motivated to share their insight and knowledge into their fandom – there may be some link here to the 'spoiler' phenomenon that is so rife within fandom (see Jenkins 2006a, ch.6), inasmuch as some fans desire to be 'the first' to find out a particular piece of news, tidbit or plot twist before anyone else does. This aspect of fan information gatekeeping, however, deserves more exploration in future studies.

6.2.4. Discovery

Discovery was not explored sufficiently in this research to make any definitive conclusions, although it seems to take mostly active forms – that is, the fan is actively seeking out and discovering information related to their fandom. Fans can be intense in their pursuit to discover seemingly trivial information. Discovering source material is important because it enables fans to build the authenticity of their fanworks. However, it seems that it is often the case that the source material, or officially produced resources, do not render these types of information easily discoverable. Therefore fans seem to prefer informal sources and/or other fans to official sources:

> For instance, a disproportionate number of fans that visit my websites are interested in the minutia of comic book history. They are sometimes interested in the hair colour of a character which only appeared once in a comic book from 40 years ago. (Participant 7)

Most Delphi participants referred to searching in online spaces, Participant 26 calling it the "quickest and easiest" way to discover a wide array of information. However, one participant talked about finding information in offline contexts, specifically because they found information hard to discover (presumably due to bad information architecture, or the limited functionality of image search and retrieval):

> I prefer to have physical materials to work from, because to me going online an [sic] searching for images can be cumbersome a lot of the time (and the internet gets distracting). (Participant 28)

Sometimes information can also be discovered serendipitously:

> you can even hear these fan conversations in places like video game retailers/ Gamesworkshop where staff, or customers will hotly debate the merits or downfalls of games. (Participant 28)

Indeed, people can be drawn into fandoms simply by being around other fans and experiencing (whether online or offline) their fannish activity:

> We engulf other people into our fandoms via the online world--I for one would never have watched Supernatural if I hadn't been engaged in Tumblr fandoms. (Participant 16)

These constitute some interesting glimpses into how fans encounter information, and these would certainly warrant some further investigation.

6.2.5. Management

It would appear from this research that management of fan-related information is often ad-hoc and informal. In short, there do not appear to be any management policies for fanworks in place. This is in stark contrast to the source texts that form the basis of fandoms, which generally come under extensive management policies, particularly copyright and intellectual property laws. As we have seen throughout this thesis, some copyright holders can be extremely hostile in the way they protect their rights (see sections 1.7.1 and 6.4.1, the lawsuit mentioned in section 5.9.3; also Schwabach 2011, ch.4). Despite the ever-present threat of potential legal action, the overwhelming consensus is that fans, for the most part, chose to disregard intellectual property rights, especially in the case of transformative fanworks.

Most management of fan information is likely to take the form of personal information management, and this is not something that is extensively covered in this research. Indeed, personal information management (or PIM) is likely to be widely divergent in many individual

cases. Sihvonen (2011) does touch on some examples of PIM within the context of fans of the *The Sims* videogame (pp.112-116), and how certain fansites promote certain ways of managing game assets. Similar work on *The Sims* is also presented in Price (2012). It is certainly the case that individual fansites or fan repositories will have their own methods of management. There is also evidence of fan communities individually managing information, in the form of gatekeeping. In the cases studied here, these appeared to be benign practices – on AO3 the policy is that tag wranglers to not use their position to 'gatekeep' the fandom, but merely to facilitate the flow, search and retrieval of information. In fact AO3 appears to have the most sophisticated information management policies in place, which can be publicly viewed[71]. However, it is difficult to draw conclusions, since the management policies of other sites, or individual communities – if indeed they exist at all – appear to be opaque, at least publicly. A survey of fanwork repositories and sites would no doubt elucidate this area.

Clearly, most fansites manage information in legally grey ways. There appears to be a general assumption that fanworks exist in an informational 'free-for-all', where anything is free to be remixed, and where even Creative Commons licenses seem to be dispensed with (none of the participants mentioned Creative Commons, nor did any of the fanworks encountered on the three platforms investigated in the case studies appear to have been posted under a Creative Commons license). In practice, however, there is a strong culture of source citation and credit within fandom, which was particularly evident on Tumblr (see section 5.9.1); and in fact, all three of the sites studied employed **Source** or **Citation** type tags quite extensively. What this illustrates is that fans are very mindful of correctly acknowledging information sources, despite a general ambivalence towards copyright issues.

Privacy is an aspect of information management that is, however, significant within fandom. Most fans write under pseudonyms, and 'outing' a fan's true identity is taboo within the fan community at large (Busse and Hellekson 2012). There is, of course, no formal policy

[71] http://archiveofourown.org/wrangling_guidelines/16

per se as to maintaining a fan's privacy – as with crediting sources, it is more a form of etiquette, or a community guideline. Fans are always given the opportunity to manage their own identity, and the information contained under that identity (e.g. allowing fans to use pseudonyms or aliases when signing up to a fan repository). This "tracks to a highly ingrained fandom value towards respecting anonymity, pseudonymity, and privacy" (Fiesler et al 2016, p.2580). It is interesting to see that in lieu of formal management policies, fan communities seem to have developed a mutual code of conduct that, while not formally codified, has become a standard operating guideline. Certainly, the dearth of formal information management policies in fan communities, and its effects on information behaviour within these groups, should be explored further.

6.2.6. Analysis

Two types of information analysis can be discerned within fan communities. Most analysis takes the form of textual interpretation – that is meta (see glossary for a definition). Meta is a significant way for fans to interpret the source text from an intellectual, sometimes even scholarly, viewpoint. HollyLime's (n.d.) essay is an example of meta. Such analyses are ways for fans to engage with the source text in ways that are not transformative or creative per se, but that evaluate and deconstruct the object of fannish passion. Several Delphi participants mentioned meta as being an integral part of the fan community, a way of "parsing and debating theories, characters, issues, etc." (participant 14), and "to address questions found in fandom" (participant 17). This kind of analysis offers a way to delve into issues around the source text that are not discussed in 'official' channels: "We can extrapolate from [the source text]," participant 16 said, "and hell yeah we do because half the time we have a better understanding of what's going on than the actors/writers/ptb [the powers that be]".

Recently, a second form of information analysis has begun to be produced, and this is fanstats, or fandom statistics. This usually takes the form of descriptive statistics, with fans analysing fandom-related metadata, usually tags, on sites such as Tumblr and AO3. The best

example of this is the Tumblr blog *ToastyStats: Fandom statistical analyses*[72], which provides stats on a wide range of fandoms. A new site, Fandom Stats[73], now offers users the ability to analyse Tumblr and AO3 metadata via API's. As far as can be ascertained, this is a relatively new phenomena, another tool for fans to assess, evaluate and deconstruct their fandoms. This new form of fan analysis will be interesting to track into the future.

6.2.7. Use

Use might be considered multi-layered. First, and most obviously, the fan must consume the source text. Consumption of peripheral texts, such as magazine articles and interviews, might be considered part of the fan's sense-making activities as they seek to fully understand and assimilate the source text. With this information, some fans choose to aggregate and share what they have learned with others, e.g. an online wiki encyclopaedia; Q&A with other fans; giving out spoilers on a discussion forum; and so on. Others may choose to apply their knowledge in creative ways, e.g. negotiating unfulfilling or missing plot points via fanfiction; reproducing character costumes and 'becoming' the character through cosplay; exploring character personalities through headcanons; and so on. Use may be individual, or collaborative and participatory; it may also be semiotic and enunciative as well as textual (Fiske 1992). Fans may use information to signal that they are fans to other fans (e.g. knowing what to wear to display your fan identity at a convention or a theme park or a special event); they may also use it to discuss recent developments in a TV series, or to share tactics on how to complete a level in a game, or to find out which is the best site to go to find manga translations, or to learn how create a fanvid. It may also be the case that there are certain fans who facilitate the use of that information, e.g. gaming experts whose knowledge makes them the obvious choice to go to for advice; or mentors who teach newcomers the norms within a certain fan community. Uses are many and varied. The creation of fanworks itself may be

[72] http://toastystats.tumblr.com/. The owner of the blog, DestinationToast, was kind enough to lend me (and tweak) their Python script for the Tumblr tag analysis undertaken in chapter 5.
[73] http://fandomstats.org/

considered a form of information use – it is in effect using the source text as a resource for the creative process. This was discussed in more detail in section 6.2.1.

In some cases, what is fanon may be elevated to the canon (for instance, *Sims* fan mods being used by EA/Maxis in later expansion packs for the original *Sims* game), or fans may come to be hired by the media industry. Whilst this is generally rare, there is a long history of such leaps from amateur to professional (e.g. *Star Trek: TNG, Deep Space Nine* and *Voyager* all accepting scripts from previously unpublished fans) which continues to this day, particularly in the videogames industry (Gustafsson and Höglund 2016). This allows fanworks to bring the information communication chain full circle. In other words, the fanwork is effectively merged into the source text, the original point of consumption.

6.2.8. Preservation

Preservation has been a central concern to fan communities due to the impermanence of the digital and previous experiences with data loss (De Kosnik 2016b; Versaphile 2011). While this was not directly addressed by the Delphi study or case study participants, the literature does support an awareness of the issues around preserving fan culture:

> […] for those who seek to read and be read, to build on and be inspired by the collective history of fannish creativity, there is nothing so vital to authorial fandom's survival as the archive. […] losing our stories may indeed mean losing parts of our history (Versaphile 2011, p.2).

Price (2012) conducted a virtual ethnography that showed how fans built an archive to preserve fan-created game assets from an old game, *The Sims*, many of which were no longer online or were on sites that were abandoned by their owners. Members of the site would donate items from their own collections, some of which had been built up over many years, and the archive was maintained and organised by volunteers. The site became a repository that not only preserved a neglected and endangered aspect of videogaming fan culture, but also created a community around it that allowed fans to teach one another how to make their own custom-made content to use in the game.

AO3 is undertaking similar preservation efforts, but on a much wider scale. Although the site is mostly dedicated to fanfiction, it does allow other fanworks such as artwork to be uploaded, making its remit much wider. It seems to have policies in place for some of its preservation activities, although these are not as formal or stringent as might be seen in institutional/corporate archives. The archive is run by volunteers, funded by donations, and its contents are provided by the fans themselves. In common with most fan repositories, such as those found on personal websites, its procedures are largely ad hoc, although its scale is global, and its remit is specifically to preserve fannish culture. It is, however, a telling example of the more concerted efforts fans are putting in to accomplish this endeavour.

The preservation of fanworks and fannish culture has recently been discussed at great length by De Kosnik (2016a) – since her work was published during the write-up of this thesis, it is examined in greater detail in section 7.1.

6.2.9. Understanding

Understanding constitutes the final stage of the information communication chain (see Figure 1, p.13). It is hard to define, but falls somewhere between knowledge and wisdom in Ackoff's knowledge pyramid, wherein understanding is "conveyed by explanations, answers to why questions"; knowledge is "conveyed by instructions, answers to how-to questions"; wisdom "deals with values. It involves the exercise of judgment" (Ackoff 1989, n.p.). Rowley (2007), however, notes that "more recent commentators have disputed that understanding is a separate level" (p.166). Nevertheless, Bawden and Robinson (2016) have encouraged its restoration to Ackoff's pyramid, seeing it as a vital aspect of information behaviour. They have defined it as being "about knowing why, about deep explanations, about the inner working of things, about coherence, elegance and simplicity" (p.295). It is therefore useful to think of understanding as an appreciation of the meaning inherent in the information obtained; how the information is internalised, synthesised, interpreted and applied.

In this context, understanding appears to be a key aspect of the fan information communication chain. Discussion of fan-related information is one of the pleasures that fans usually indulge in, giving them an opportunity to delve into a fictional world and the characters that inhabit them – to understand storylines, character motivations and personalities, even the philosophical and theological underpinnings of the world itself and the events within it. The Delphi participants were keen to reference how important discussion and understanding was within fandom:

> Sharing headcanons, theories, ideas for alternate universes, responses to various aspects of whatever media fans are currently consuming...fandom is a huge information hub just by existing. Fans aren't just swallowing media whole without examining it. We're constantly discussing it, debating it, criticizing it, and being inspired by it. (Participant 25)

> Other fans will help you understand a series better that you love, create references of it, jokes, and discuss it with you. (Participant 11)

> Whenever I really get into a show or movie or book or series, I want to discuss it. I want to discuss the story, the plot development, the character development, the relationships, possible theories, the themes in the story. But I don't have anyone in RL who matches my enthusiasm. Which is why I wind up going online to find people who have that same level of enthusiasm. So we talk about a lot of things, examine the media and its themes. (Participant 9)

> Fans like to talk about favourite characters, particular episodes or shows they really relate to and identify with. I know that fans can get into really heated online discussions/arguments, but I've never really participated in that side of it. (Participant 29)

Fan discussion is important because it is an integral part of the process through which fans negotiate their understanding of their fandom and what the understanding of that fandom is within the wider fan community – that is, the fanon (see Glossary). Authenticity, as discussed earlier in the chapter, is a significant aspect of any fanwork – the more 'true' a character is to the fanon (or indeed canon), the more highly prized the fanwork becomes. Thus fans are eager to discuss their theories, not merely to gain a more acute understanding of their fandom, but also as a part of creative process itself. Accuracy (adherence to the facts of the canon) and authenticity (capturing the essence of a character or their world) reflects that understanding. For this reason – this desire to understand the object of their fannish passion –

fans are keen to appear as well-versed in the source material as possible and to absorb as much information and news related to it as they can:

> There is to some extent a desire to be at the top of a fandom hierarchy, and due to the nature of fandom deeper understanding of it, or iteration with the creators, makes you stand out. This could be in the guise of a fanfic that everyone wants to read because it 'gets the characters', or writing or drawing things in response to what the fanbase sees as popular. (Delphi participant 28)

> […] information is, to my mind, one of the key ways in which fans create and maintain a sense of closeness/connectedness with the fannish object. The more information you have about the thing, the better you 'know' it, and the closer you are. (Delphi participant 14)

The need for authenticity drives the need to 'get things right', to delve into the minutiae of a fandom that might seem trivial to most outsiders, and this in turns fulfils the drive to understand the fandom at large. Being able to quote or refer to a certain episode in your fanfic or meta might bolster your interpretation of a character's personality; or getting the correct colour for a character's clothing may be vital for the authenticity of your painting or costume. Fans need to be able to find that information – even if it is considered trivial minutiae – and this motivates much of the information seeking process:

> I think a lot of the information accessed depends on what you're doing, which can be anything from research for your own fan work, or to get clarification on some aspect that you don't understand, or to identify a quote or particular episode. (Delphi participant 26)

Therefore I would contend that the need to understand is an integral part of the fan information communication chain, and indeed of the wider role of being a dedicated fan itself. The fan's passion for the source text is such that satisficing (that is, pursuing a course of action that requires the minimum effort to achieve a particular goal) is not the normal course of action within fan information seeking. Instead, it is driven precisely by a need for *understanding*, for an end goal that entails more than simply 'getting the job done'. For the dedicated fan, understanding is the *intended* outcome of fan information seeking, and that understanding supports – nourishes, even – the creation of further fanworks, whatever format

they are instantiated in. Therefore, the *creation* stage of the fan information communication chain is intrinsically tied to the *understanding* phase – the chain does not simply end with *understanding*, but continually cycles back to *creation*.

6.3. Impact on LIS

This research gives some insight into a type of information user that has not previously been given thorough attention within LIS – cult media fans. While some work has been done on hobbyists and collectors within LIS – such as Hartel et al (2016), Margree et al (2014), Hartel (2010), etc. – this research has discovered areas in which fans display different information behaviour to that of hobbyists. This is in the intensity, even obsessiveness, with which fans engage in that behaviour; its community-driven, collaborative aspects; its creative, transformative, performative and pleasure-seeking dimensions; and the general ambivalence towards copyright.

So far in the LIS literature, scant attention has been paid to information work as a creative or transformative activity, apparently apart from Hektor's (2001) concept of 'dressing', which has made little impact on the field. This, however, is a focal aspect of fan information behaviour, and I believe it is a novel finding within LIS that there are some users whose information behaviour is play-based, pleasure-based, and a source of creative endeavours that enrich our culture.

Other factors of importance are that fans are very concerned with the preservation of their own work and their own culture, as Versaphile (2011) has laid out. This drive to preserve and archive fanworks has lead fans to co-opt available technologies to this end, using a variety of sites and methods, such as LiveJournal and mailing lists, in ways that they were not originally built for, leaving the status of these fanworks precarious, and subject to the fallout of server breakdowns and corporate takeovers. In more recent years, fans have begun to address these problems more directly – Archive of Our Own is a non-profit, fan-run site that

runs on donations and volunteer efforts, buoyed by the fans' personal investment in its continued existence.

Such efforts require technical expertise, and it has been shown that fans are tech-savvy – one of the earliest groups to make use of the internet (Busse and Hellekson 2012, p.13; Jenkins 2006a, pp.37-38; De Kosnik 2016a, p.11), and to adapt to and embrace new technological affordances. "Fan fiction archivists got into the digital preservation game so early," De Kosnik (2016b) says, "that they definitely encountered all of these dangers [hosting companies shutting down sites, abandoned archiving projects, system crashes, etc.] and more, and have collectively created many defences against digital loss and disappearance that all archivists can and should learn from" (n.p). They have discovered novel ways of organising and indexing their work (such as we have seen in chapter 5 of this thesis) – AO3's curated folksonomy, in particular, is an innovative solution to the messiness of folksonomies that on the whole successfully standardises fan taxonomies without losing the original tagger's intended meaning. Such a system may be implemented in wider contexts, and should be of great interest to information architects. In this light, there are many ways in which LIS can learn from fans – from their best practices, their technological innovations, their solutions to the preservation of complex digital objects. If a future scenario were to come about, in which there was a wider, concerted effort to preserve digital fan culture, collaboration between LIS professionals and fans would be recommended, in light of the findings of this study.

A new model of information behaviour has been developed in the course of this research (see Figure 56, p.319), which illustrates the areas of the information behaviour unique to fans, and may be applied in future research on fan information behaviour – it may also find applicability in the information behaviour of similar serious leisure communities, such as hobbyists, enthusiasts and volunteers.

Novel research methods have been used in this research which may be useful to other scholars. The Serious Leisure Delphi method can be applied not only to fans, but also to other

serious leisure communities, in a variety of settings and disciplines. Tag analysis has also been used in a novel way – that is, as a method for investigating information behaviour – and may be used as an additional quantitative method within the LIS researcher's toolkit.

6.4. Impact on other domains

Throughout the research undertaken in this thesis, we have seen that the information behaviour of fans has wider applicability to domains outside of library and information science. This wider impact affects several domains, which are discussed below.

6.4.1. Copyright

The relationship of fandom to copyright has evidenced much discussion in the relevant literature (see section 1.7.1). Recent events, such as the *Oracle v. Google* case and its relationship to fictional languages such as Klingon and Quenya (Duan 2015), and the related furore around Axanar Productions' Star Trek high production value fan-film (Lifshitz 2017; Van der Sar 2016), illustrate that copyright is still a very real and significant threat to fan activities and creativity. Other recent cases, such as the Dr. Seuss estate suing a Star Trek crossover book (Mullin 2016) challenge typical views of fair use and the right to appropriate intellectual property for the purposes of satire and parody, as long as they are transformative works. This is significant, as many crossover fanworks are traded on sites such as TeeFury, assumedly with the assurance that sellers are operating within fair use[74]. The continuing legal challenges to fanworks, which have existed for decades, suggest that it is a very present issue, and is likely to continue to be so, within the fan community.

Both the Delphi study and the case studies lent considerable support to this, as many of the participants showed an interest in, and willingness to talk about, issues of copyright.

[74] TeeFury's own vision statement refers specifically to fandom and fair use: "TeeFury provides a platform for transformative parody that strives to bridge the gap between artistic interpretation, fair use, and fan expectations by furnishing a platform for new, original, and transformative designs that parody, satirize, or provide social commentary on pop culture icons" (https://www.teefury.com/about/).

Despite the complexities surrounding these issues, and the protectiveness many franchise creators have over their intellectual property, the overriding opinion of most of the participants here was one of ambivalence. Most of the fans interviewed simply chose to disregard issues of copyright altogether. This is reflected in several responses found in both the Delphi and case studies:

> I know a number of fans who more or less make a living from fanart while operating in a legally grey area because of copyright issues. (Delphi participant 2)
>
> I think fan works are being created and disseminated regardless of copyright. (Delphi participant 18)
>
> I think fans already know how to get around copyright (or they just ignore it) when disseminating their work. (Delphi participant 28)
>
> In my experience I don't think fans worry too much about the copyright laws. They're definitely more concerned that the fanworks are true to the characters and the franchise. If the fanwork is honest and a fair representation of the story/characters that's really what's important. (Case study participant E)
>
> I don't think fans care, because the fans want to see more products of their fandom out there. (Case study participant F)

Especially interesting were the responses from the Etsy sellers (case study participants E and F – see pp.277-279), who made money from selling fanworks that used licensed characters. Both seemed unconcerned by this fact, participant E even going so far as to say "it doesn't keep me up at night". The amount of fanworks for sale on Etsy, as well as the attitude of many of the research participants, and the existence of fanfiction for sale on Amazon, complete with ISBN (e.g. Harding 2017; Nichols 2008), suggests that this is a *general* view held by fans, and not simply an isolated occurrence. Case study participant E in particular considered that she was doing her fellow fans a service by fulfilling requests and making beautiful items that fans enjoyed adding to their collections of fanart and paraphernalia – suggesting that elements of the fan gift economy are being adopted in commercial settings. Close (2016) has put forward the idea of 'Do-It-Together' (DIT) (as opposed to the concept of DIY) to describe the way in which Etsy sellers participate in making the best out of their stores,

such as working together to troubleshoot problems with a store. In the case of fan sellers, I would extend this concept to buyers and *sellers*, who may collaborate on the goods created (by the seller) and sold (by the buyer). If, as case study participant F said, "the fans want to see more products of their fandom out there", and official sources are not providing them, then the natural alternative is fellow fans who are also creators – the drive to consume fan-related products outweighs concerns about the possible illegality of their status.

Whilst the debate about the illegality of fanworks continues, the fact remains that fans themselves are choosing to disregard it wholesale, despite growing challenges in recent law cases. It is extremely problematic for license-holders that a sizeable sub-section of their audience shares this view, and it is hardly reasonable to suggest enforcing copyright on even a tiny fraction of those fans who make money from the sale of fanworks. Paired with this is the growing sophistication of technologies that fans are using to create fanworks, and the possibilities of crowdsourcing that can bring thousands or millions of dollars to a fan project. As Lifshitz (2017) suggests, fan creativity has been limited, in this case by Paramount Pictures, to strict guidelines on what is small-scale and amateur, and therefore permissible. But fanworks are becoming increasingly professional due to technological affordances and the level of dedication of their creators, and the border between what is amateur and professional is becoming increasingly blurred. It must therefore be considered that copyright and intellectual property laws be updated to reflect the current state of digital technology, one which encourages the proliferation of remediative and transformative works.

6.4.2. Publishing

Fanfiction in particular highlights the new ways in which online publishing allows cultural artefacts to be shared with vast audiences. This also extends to fanart, fanvids, fanfims, and other media. Since fanfiction cannot be published (because it infringes copyright), publishing takes place online on personal websites and blogs, or on fanfic archives

such as Fanfiction.net and AO3. These sites have, over the years, developed their own publishing and editing practices.

Beta-reading is an obvious example of the communal and collaborative forms of editing and reviewing that have grown up around fanfiction. In lieu of a professional editor or proof-reader, authors may avail themselves of experienced fans who will offer these kinds of services. This extends to other media such as fanvids or podfics, not just fanworks in the written form. Fanfiction.net now allows members to sign up as beta-readers.

It would seem that technological advances have largely been responsible for the changes in the way fans publish. Fanfiction.net, AO3 and Wattpad are all sites that streamline the publishing process and make it relatively easy to post creative works in expectation of a global audience. Platforms such as Lulu.com allow anyone to self-publish print books and many fans have used this route to publish their stories and artwork. The collaborative affordances of Web 2.0 and current cloud-based tools are also important in this process, as Delphi participant 19 suggests:

> […] production occurs via (or is helped with) computers and online tools. Cowriting is much easier when two people can access a google doc; challenges or fests are planned in a shared online meeting space or over Skype/IM and then get organized over shared docs; betaing of vids and podfic is easier when you can upload material fast and share it easily.

Online publishing, in all its myriad forms, is now incredibly easy and affordable. This has lowered the bar to sharing, accessing and disseminating all forms of creativity. The Delphi study participants were unanimous in their opinion that the internet has changed the ways in which media is created and shared. There was no suggestion amongst any of the participants that fandom needed traditional forms of publishing in order to legitimise fanworks or reach a potential audience. Fan-based modes of dissemination, and the appropriation of existing digital tools, sufficed.

There are, however, other avenues for fans to seek publication, which involve 'filing off the serial numbers' of a fanfic and publishing it as original fiction, as E. L. James did with *Fifty Shades of Grey* (Peckosie and Hill 2015). There are some examples of fanfiction authors being 'recruited' by publishing houses to write original fiction (Edidin 2014) – a case in point is Anna Todd, who was picked up after the popularity of her One Direction fanfiction, *After* (Kircher 2015). And as we have seen there have been attempts to monetise fanfiction on sites such as Kindle Worlds and Figment, which have had varying degrees of success (Vadde 2017). Lastly, self-publishing is also possible through sites like Lulu.com, as we see in books such as Harding (2017) and Nichols (2008).

As for non-textual formats, Web 2.0 offers many options for publication. Fan vids, fanfilms and audio-visual remixes can be posted on YouTube (see Figure 2, p.81); podfic and podcasts on SoundCloud (such as the Fansplaining podcast[75]); gaming mods are posted on various sites (Price 2012 discusses CTO Sims, an online community that archived and shared fan-created gaming mods); fanart is widely published on sites such as deviantART, Tumblr and Elfwood. Non-digital fanworks, such as print books, paintings, arts and crafts, can be sold online on sites like Etsy, TeeFury and RedBubble; or at fan conventions and other specialised venues.

6.4.3. Media industry

The participants interviewed in this thesis held mixed views on the media industries and their relationship with them. In general, there was a perception that the media industry was more open to the involvement of fans; although this depended to a large degree on the franchise and which company owns that franchise. Delphi participant 9 gave an extremely interesting example of this, giving a detailed account of the perceived disdain the producers of

[75] https://soundcloud.com/fansplaining

the TV show *Teen Wolf* had for their fans; in contrast she cites the TV show *Hannibal* as having a positive relationship with theirs:

> Teen Wolf in particular has a really shitty relationship with its fan base I feel. They don't respect their fans. They look down at them. Mock them even. They've used their fans and thrown them away. When they started, they courted fandom a lot. Treated them with respect, they even held this fanfic contest! But around the 3rd season mark things because [sic] to change. There was a clear change in attitude where a certain section of the fandom (the sterek fandom) began to be pushed aside? And it only got worse. The Sterek Campaign had organized a charity auction to raise money for a wolf sanctuary and they managed to raise over $10K. They went on to win an award at the MTV fandom awards or something at SDC2014 but when it came to the award time? They handed the award out to some random TW fan who wasn't even associated with the SC. They didn't even mention the Sterek Campaign. They said the wrong name on stage and didn't acknowledge their mistakes […] I feel an excellent example of professionals working well with fandom is NBC Hannibal. Bryan Fuller has been supportive of people shipping Hannigram to the point that hes said that while hannigram wont be canon but he encourages people to explore it and to make fanfics and fanart from it.

This response clearly illustrates the dichotomous nature of the relationship between the media industry and fans. On the one hand, the industry shows a willingness to court the opinion of fans, holding polls and competitions, encouraging the creation of user-generated content and acknowledging their fan base through the incorporation of Easter eggs and other forms of fan service into their products. The industry has learned that to keep an audience, their best chance is to turn them into fans (Winget 2014) or to increase consumer participation and co-creation of their products through such motivators as playfulness (Huang and Benyoucef 2013). However, fans question their own agency and seem to be aware that their participation is not always welcome:

> Producers tend to be blind to what fandom really wants most of the time, ignoring the popular relationships in favor of their own visions. (Delphi participant 10)

> The influence [on] producers, regardless of their fandom's size relies on their willingness to actually listen. (Delphi participant 12)

> In terms of influencing producers it becomes a bit more difficult to quantify I think. Fans and producers increasingly use social media to interact with each other and fan campaigns to save

> shows (like Chuck) have - at times - been successful. So it might be that in broad terms (like saving the series) fans have more influence than in specifics. Steven Moffat isn't likely to be persuaded to have a female Doctor by virtue of fans' tweets, for example, but the BBC might be persuaded to show a series in one go rather than splitting it halfway through. (Delphi participant 13)

> I think the producers of a given property probably have anywhere from a vague to an intimate awareness of what happens within (transformative) fandom - maybe a spectrum ranging from Sherlock (very little, please don't talk to us about it) to Hannibal (bring us all the fic, especially the kinky stuff). But at the end of the day, I think there are so many external factors that come into play - including network/studio prerogatives, actor prerogatives, etc. - that there simply cannot be a straight fan-to-producer line of influence. (Delphi participant 14)

Here we can surmise that there is no standard way in which we might say that fans influence the media industry, when that industry, of course, can choose to embrace or ignore. In general terms, however, we can say that the rise of the internet, particularly Web 2.0 and social media, has opened up the channels between fan and producer, and there is *some* form of exchange, and, in some cases, symbiosis, in that some fan activity may influence important decisions in the creation of an end product (see, for example, Jalamo 2016, for an account of how negative fan reviews caused the makers of the videogame *Mass Effect 3* to completely redo the ending of the game in response).

In some cases – rare though far from unheard of – it even appears that some fans *become* a part of the media industry. Some have started out writing fanfiction and ended up writing official novelisations for a franchise (as discussed in section 2.2.2.3); Delphi participant 26 references this clearly:

> I think Christie Golden started out on fanfiction. She is now a professional writer who has written official/endorsed novels for quite a few franchises (Buffy/Angel, WoW, Assassins Creed, Star Wars/Clone Wars).

And Participant 6, quoted in section 6.1, mentions several people of her acquaintance whose work so impressed media producers that they were later employed by them, one even ending up working for the producers of the franchise they were a fan of.

Whilst such instances may be rare, this suggests that fans are increasingly becoming co-producers of media industry products, but the playing field is not yet a level one. This may change as technologies evolve and audience behaviours become more participatory, transmedial, and multimodal.

6.4.4. Education

The clearest finding with regards to education is the propensity of fans to engage in forms of mentorship and peer learning. Much of fandom, in fact, seems to be centred on learning – learning about the source text, learning the customs and practices of a fan community, learning the rituals and performances endemic to that community. More experienced fans tend to pass on such knowledge to 'novice' fans. Other knowledge might be practical and in this case too certain fans will act as mentors. For example, in a game modding community, which requires specialist skills in computing and programming, learning from other fans is common. But even in the 'softer' arts, such as drawing and writing, fans will teach one another and pass on their skills. Beta-reading is a case in point, where creative writing abilities can be improved by correcting grammar, spelling mistakes, and by making constructive criticism on style. But there also exist YouTube videos where fan artists post Photoshop tutorials, or guides on how to make a fanvid and other audiovisual works. This attests to the generosity of fans, and their willingness to pool their resources and share their tacit knowledge. As discussed in section 6.1., fans may be gatekeepers in the sense that they possess specialist knowledge, but they prefer to actively share that knowledge rather than wait for someone to ask for it:

> Fans are good at encouraging each other to create and to share and it can be something like teaching each other how to draw or sharing headcanons. They encourage learning new skills, picking up information, many of them would compile resource guides or list down all the facts of a particular subject/plot/character. (Delphi participant 20)

> At the Oekaki board people could leave comments with either praise, tips or downright criticism. Some of the better artists would try and help the ones that were still struggling with useful tips and tricks. (Delphi participant 6)

> For me, online fans have been very helpful in helping me out whenever I'm stuck. If I can't remember some plot point or if I need a sounding board or if I need quick feedback on a story or edit or anything, its easy to find people who are willing to help. That's the biggest thing about online communities and fandom – if you're in a pinch, you will always find people rushing to help you. There wont be any time where people will not be there to help you, in ANY way. (Delphi participant 9)

> I find fandom most helpful for my creative practices. There are always tutorials that you can rely on, other fans that maintain Wikis, other gamers that help you on forums when you are stuck. From my personal experience, I always try my best to help other fans too and support their fan practices by betareading, uploading photos and blogs, and reviewing for a fan zine. If we don't help each other, there would be no fan culture to speak of. (Delphi participant 11)

This apparent eagerness to teach, to help, to encourage, is essential for any kind of effective learning, and it is therefore unsurprising that some teachers are bringing fandom into the classroom as a motivator for students to learn (Vorobel and Kim 2017; Garcia 2016; Harb and Abdullah 2016; Edfelt, Fjordevik and Inose 2012; Black 2009; 2008). But more importantly fandom, and its generous attitude to knowledge, can clearly demonstrate the success of peer-learning and its potential to educators in all sectors.

6.4.5. Other findings

During the Delphi study, participants were eager to talk about the other ways in which fans help one another, and their statements mostly concerned charitable support and activism. Whilst it was not the remit of this thesis to look at these aspects of fan practice, there was sufficient mention of them to warrant a summary glance at the findings.

In terms of charitable support, it was found that fans helped one another through mental, practical and physical problems. Some of the predicaments mentioned were significant life issues, such as helping to pay medical bills and fill out visa applications. Others were fan-based, such as buying a T-shirt or magazine not available outside of a certain country, and mailing it to the intended recipient; translating manga; or providing the issue of a comic with a certain piece of dialogue in it. Yet others were basic forms of support: "talking about

family and personal issues, being a listening ear, offering support, sharing gifs to cheer me up" (Delphi participant 13). These are all evidence of the wide range of aid and assistance fans give, and is in keeping with the 'generous spirit' encountered so far. This is not to say, however, that *all* fans behave in this manner. Some participants were quick to point out the negative aspects of fandom that exist, such as misogyny, flame wars, trolling and other forms of harassment. These are elements that should not be ignored, despite the positive actions of most fans.

With regards to fan activism, some participants talked about the ways in which it had influenced the media industry. Delphi participant 11 gave real world examples: "The fans of Firefly and Chuck, for instance, actively fought against the cancellation of their favorite shows", and Delphi participant 26 stated:

> For example in the ST [Star Trek] Voyager franchise, fans wanted the characters of Paris and Torres to become a couple, and were speculating and writing about the Paris/Torres hook-up. I think this was initially 'officially' picked up by Christie Golden, who wrote official Star Trek novels, and then it was worked into the STV canon (Paris and Torres eventually got married and had a child in the show).

Fans also appear to be heavily engaged in the rights of minorities such as women, LGBT people, and people of colour:

> I feel like I've seen a lot of criticism from fans (and sometimes other professionals) of certain creators or works that may – MAY – be influencing the works. Like criticizing a TV show's depiction of women or people of color, and advocating for more and better minority representation. … fans can encourage each other to support a thing that is better about minority representation, or point each other in the direction or works that do a good or better job at that. I still think we're in an uphill climb if these are the values that fans want to see represented, but I'm really happy that people are advocating for that. (Delphi participant 18)

Fan activism is certainly a way in which fans can engage with the media industry and win, if their combined voices are sufficiently loud enough. These types of grassroots activities are especially empowered by digital technologies and social media, and are not just relegated to 'letter-writing campaigns' or even demonstrations. Again, modern technology is changing

the ways in which fans engage with the objects of their fandom, and in which they are able to get their voices heard.

6.5. Model of fan information behaviour

Part of the empirical work was to test the original model of fan information behaviour, which was developed from the findings of the literature review (see Figure 14, p.113). The model was successful in that it depicted several aspects that were borne out by the Delphi and case studies – such as the inclusion of Fiske's semiotic, enunciative and textual production types; how the fan text can sometimes inform and/or influence the source text; it reflects the fact that online and offline information behaviours are blurred; and the fact that produsage does take place. However, there were several aspects of fan information behaviour that were not represented in the model:

- It does not differentiate between encyclopaedic and transformative works.
- It does not account for the fact that information work takes place around the source text as well as the fan text.
- It does not represent information gatekeeping.
- It does not represent the general disregard for copyright.
- It does not reflect the money-making activities of fans.
- It does not address the fact that information reuse and produsage also feeds semiotic and enunciative production as well as textual production.
- It fails to capture the more complex relationships developed between fans-fans and fans-producers, e.g. friendships, activisim, charity, support, etc.

For these reasons, a second version of the model was developed to reflect these additional findings. The updated model is presented in Figure 56, on the following page. Further information behaviour research with fan communities could be undertaken to validate this model.

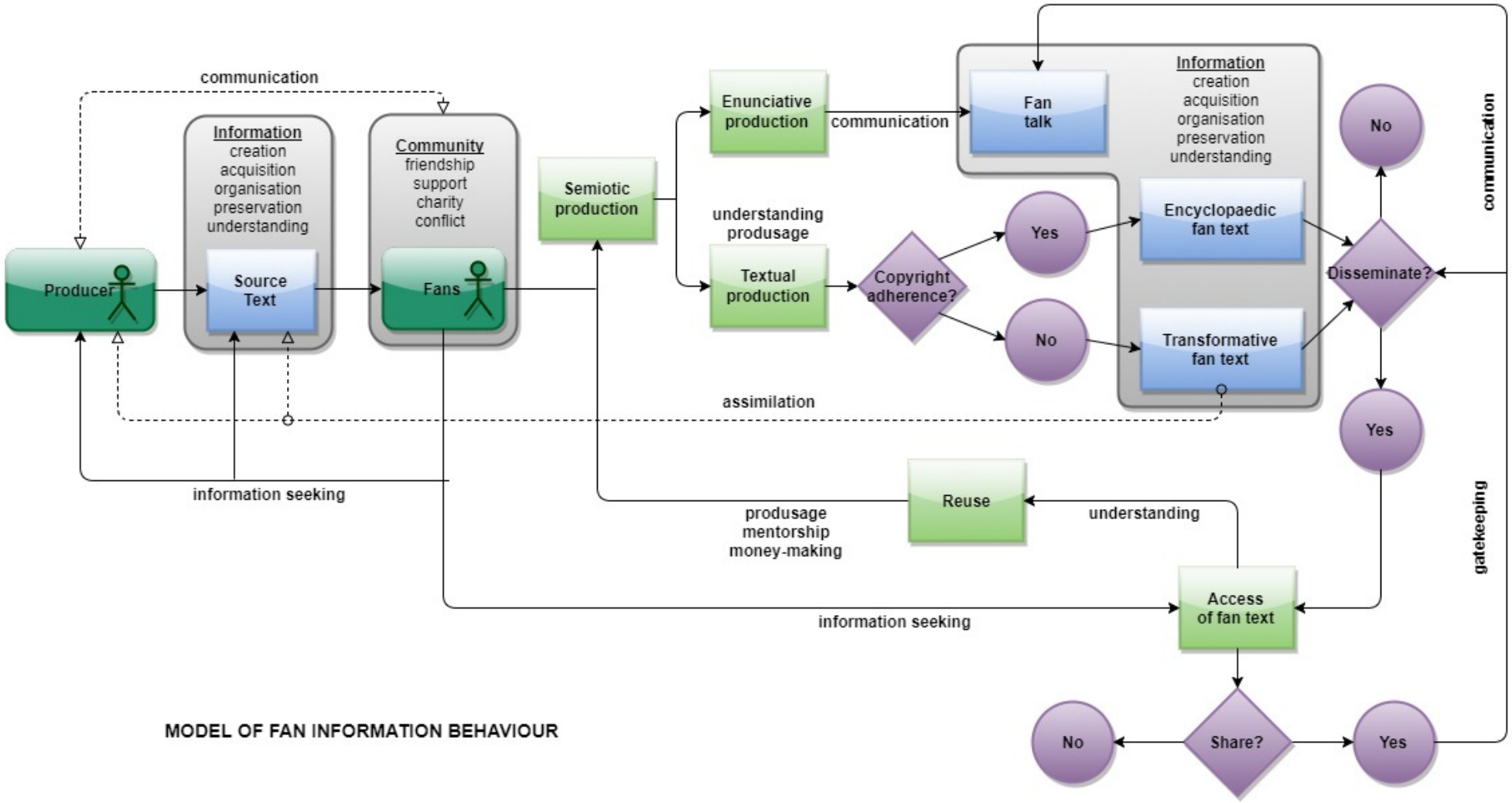


Figure 56: The final version of the model of information behaviour

6.6. Summary

The insights of the research provided in this thesis can lead us to several conclusions about the information behaviour of fans. These can be summarised as follows:

FINDINGS

1) Fan information behaviour is generous.
2) It is participatory and collaborative.
3) It is informal.
4) It is based in fantasy, play and performance.
5) It disregards traditional methods of bibliographical control for its own.
6) It favours creative freedom over copyright and intellectual property laws.
7) It encourages mentorship and peer learning.

Table 26: Research findings.

7. PART SEVEN – Recent developments and future work

This section deals with recent developments in the literature which are related to the research presented in this thesis. Due to the timing of the publication of this research, and the considerable contribution it had to this thesis, it was felt that it would be too disruptive to add to the literature review, and warranted discussion in its own section. The following is that discussion, alighting on the particular significance of these developments, and how it may affect future research.

7.1. Recent developments

During the write-up of this thesis, two important books were published that fell right at the intersection between the two disciplines researched here – LIS and fan studies. The two books – one a monograph, the other an edited volume – specifically explored fandom practices through the lens of LIS. The first, *Rogue Archives* by Abigail De Kosnik (2016a), expands upon her original work on 'archontic literature' (Derecho 2006; see p.57) and discusses the ways in which fans are the librarians and archivists of their own cultural artefacts. The second, *Fans and Videogames*, edited by Swalwell et al (2017), presents a wide range of essays which also explore the videogame fan as librarian and archivist, and also where they have come together with the LIS profession to preserve videogame hard- and software, lending the kind of technical expertise and knowledge that LIS professionals lack.

From the first page of *Rogue Archives*, De Kosnik articulates the driving force for much of my own research:

> […] people who never underwent training in library and information sciences (LIS) but designated themselves 'archivists' anyway, built freely accessible online archives, and began uploading (or assisting users with uploading) whatever content they deemed suitable for digital preservation. Digital archiving, while of increasing interest to traditional memory institutions, has been most enthusiastically embraced by nonprofessionals – by amateurs,

> fans, hackers, pirates, and volunteers – in other words, by 'rogue' memory workers. Digital archives of cultural content, not associated with any physical museum, library, or archive, populate the Internet, to the point that many people refer to the Internet as a giant archive (pp.1-2).

The digital spaces that these rogue memory workers work in are the titular rogue archives, which De Kosnik (2016a, p.2; pp.76-77) defines by the following:

- Constant availability;
- Zero barriers to entry (as long as one can connect to the internet);
- Content that can be streamed or downloaded in full, for free;
- No regard for copyright;
- Content that has never been, and likely never will be, contained in a memory institution;
- They are dedicated to the persistent publication and long-term preservation of their contents;
- Their founders are not LIS professionals;
- They are staffed primarily or entirely by volunteers.

De Kosnik posits fans as viewing the internet as a vast archive of mass media artefacts – narratives, images, videos, characters, worlds, etc. – and it is the fan's passion for these media artefacts that leads to two important actions. The first is 'archontic production', an expansion of De Kosnik's original concept of 'archontic literature' (Derecho 2006), wherein fans remix and remediate not only literature, but other media, thus adding back to the cultural archive. The second is that the fan may take on the role of rogue archivist, librarian, curator of that cultural archive. This is important because the cultural artefacts within this mass media archive are dynamic and instantiated in a varied array of formats that LIS is just now beginning to tackle. They are not merely text, images or video. They are also game mods, animation, 3D art, costumes, and often transcend the boundaries of what De Kosnik calls 'archival memory' – stable formats that are resistant to change –

and 'embodied memory' – and here she uses Taylor's (2003, p.20) quote – "performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing – in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge". These intersections between archival and embodied memory are only just beginning to be tentatively explored by LIS (see, especially, Robinson 2015a; 2015b); but here I would argue that fans and other rogue memory workers are already tackling these issues in a more direct way, and without the benefit of the theoretical underpinnings of LIS, nor the expertise of the LIS professions. In an era where libraries are in increasingly straitened circumstances, and also where the role of the volunteer and of crowdsourcing in the GLAM sector is seeing its ascendancy, De Kosnik's findings would suggest that fans and other rogue memory workers have a great deal to offer to the information professions, especially in its efforts to preserve and conserve digital, embodied or immersive documents:

> Fan fiction archives can teach information science about what it means to try to preserve culture in the moment of its unfolding, cultural forms at their peak of production levels. Information science understands a lot about preserving cultural objects that are old, that have taken on significance in the time since their release, but preserving digital culture means archiving texts, images, video, and motion graphics as they are circulating, when they're the most relevant, not when they are relegated to 'the past' (De Kosnik 2016b, n.p.).

In the era of Web 2.0, it is, as De Kosnik notes, getting harder to distinguish between 'fanworks' and 'fan performance' (2016a, p.188), and of course, this is a blurring of 'works' and 'performance' in general – of the archival memory, and the embodied memory. Where fanworks become more performative is in the participatory spaces of Web 2.0. It is in the commentaries and reviews left on fanworks; on the Tumblr threads and their annotated tags; in the live fic collaborations on Google Docs and other online sandboxes; in the Skype chats where plots and storylines are discussed; in the shared experiences that go into a video of a multiplayer walkthrough of a videogame. These are not static works that can simply be archived and stored away. These are dynamic content, and the archive itself is evolving, fluid and immutable.

What De Kosnik highlights – and what is discussed and affirmed throughout this thesis – is that this rogue memory 'work' is not work in the traditional sense, but pleasure, and moreover, it is self-affirming. As she points out, and as has been borne out in this thesis, fanwork is "a productivity driven by pleasure seeking rather than by an imperative to do wage work; […] it is time spent on one's self rather than on one's family or work customers/colleagues" (p.159). This is borne out in all aspects of the fan-as-memory-worker process, not merely at the point of creation on the information communication chain. Even the ingestion of materials into the rogue archive is a source of pleasure and fun, and De Kosnik notes 'acquisition drives' in the form of contests, challenges and prompts (ch. 4) that are run by many fanfic communities – fan creators answer the challenge, and post their work in the archive. Much of the process that leads up to the creation of a fanwork – whatever that might be – is actually performative in nature, with the groundwork being laid in digital spaces that are often public and collaborative. These might include research, discussion and live chat (on sites such as Tumblr), creating playlists and moodboards (on sites such as YouTube and Pinterest), and the contributions of ideas and suggestions from other fans. This is before the work is published on a site like AO3 or deviantART – and even then, the work is still subject to change, as audiences praise, criticise and react to it. The question of how to capture that dynamism is one that even modern technology is not yet fully equipped to answer.

De Kosnik muses on some future archive that might one day be able to record the totality of the fan creation process, that will be able to capture fan performance as well as fanworks, that will preserve everything that comes before and after 'publication' – the commentaries, the interpretations, the flame wars, the requests, the future remediation into other formats if such work is undertaken. There may even, in the future, be such things as immersive interactions between fans (Robinson 2015a), that push the boundaries of what a document is, and which will surely be a part of the fan experience, being as fandom is a centre of play, pleasure and fantasy. "Such an archive," DeKosnik (2016a) opines, "might

allow a fuller, richer grasp of the meanings of individual fan fiction works, as readers would ideally be able to recover more of the communal activity that spurred a given author to write a particular story" (p.190). This archive would challenge traditional views of copyright and intellectual property, since within the law these are defined very narrowly and do not adequately take into consideration the nature of collaborative and archontic works.

Capturing performance is vital to De Kosnik's conception of the ideal rogue archive, which she terms the 'dynarchive':

> A fan archive that defined its objects as the complete range of an performances [sic] taking place within a given fandom might make possible a far wider conception of authorship or 'makership' of fan works, in which the 'sources' from which a fan author archontically selects for incorporation into a fan fiction story include not only mainstream media texts but also fan performances (pp.190-191).

Her final opinion is that, for time being at least, such an archive is an impossibility, since there is too much "semiotic information" to be parsed, and the current state of digital technology is not adequate to the task. But as technology develops, there may be new ways of capturing these types of information, and such archives may come into being, storing a whole new type of fanwork – participatory, dynamic and immersive documents. "Such documents," Robinson (2015b) tells us, "may be both intensely personal—particularly if memories, personal fantasies, or even dreams are to be stored—but may equally be collaborative and social. There should be an important role for library/information practitioners in their organization" (p.1736).

De Kosnik herself appears sceptical of what LIS has to offer fandom. As she notes herself, fans have been "dedicating themselves to digital cultural memory work [since] the early 1990s, just as the Internet and the World Wide Web were becoming integral to daily life" (p.12) – ironically, fans have been digital archivists a lot longer than digital archivists have, and have the corresponding levels of expertise. This is mirrored in the responses of some current and former LIS students surveyed about the potential of formally collecting

fan fiction in memory institutions (Price and Robinson 2017). Some expressed the idea that fans manage their own archives 'just fine' themselves, and there was also a wariness of LIS imposing itself on the practices fans have already developed in order to preserve their own cultures. Nevertheless, the issues DeKosnik raises are important to both LIS and fandom, and there are areas of intersection that cannot be denied.

Swalwell et al.'s edited book, *Fans and Videogames* (2017), explores these areas of intersection in far greater detail than De Kosnik, and this may be because, unlike fanfiction, fanart, and other types of fanworks, there has been a concerted effort within memory institutions to preserve videogames and videogame consoles, a process which gaming fans are heavily invested in so that they are able to continue playing old games. As Swalwell et al note:

> […] fans must be acknowledged as being at the forefront of saving videogame history. Fans have dedicated themselves to ensuring that there is ongoing access to historical games. As software, continuing access to historical games is dependent on the imaging of tapes and disks before these removable storage media deteriorate, and the emulation of obsolete hardware and/or software. Alongside efforts to preserve games as playable artefacts, communities of fans have developed practices dedicated to recording, saving and sharing the recent history of videogames online (p.8).

Not only this, but videogame fans have actively shared their skills with archivists and other memory institution workers to save and preserve videogame collections. "Archivists", they add, "working to preserve media artworks, for instance, recognise that enthusiasts – most often from the historic videogame sector – have driven emulation solutions for obsolete systems that are also useable for other born digital items" (p.11). In their chapter on the obsolete Sega Dreamcast console, Deeming and Murphy (2017) highlight how the Dreamcast fan community game together to provide these sorts of solutions, entirely rebuilding games essentially through a process of trial and error, and effectively creating a digital commons to share their work and inform other fans how to

rebuild old games – or build new ones entirely from scratch. This kind of mentorship is also evident in the findings presented throughout this thesis.

The most important chapter in the book – from this perspective at least – is that by deWinter and Kocurek (2017), which discusses the relationship between memory institutions and the fans who have donated their personal videogame collections. These fans had become 'hobbyist archivists', who wanted to hand their collections over to 'the professionals'; but there was a tension in that both hobbyist and professional archivist saw the objects within the collection in different ways. Fans were concerned that professional archivists might mistreat their collections and that the objects within the collection might lose their meaning. This is an unavoidable circumstance as objects do, indeed, not lose but change their meaning when they enter an institution – they are perceived and treated in a different way. "Archivists and librarians are not collectors," deWinter and Kocurek say; "they collect, to be sure, but their subjectivity is different, and their relationship with the objects is necessarily different as well […] Understanding the cultural, emotional, and economic contexts in which fans become collectors, and in which collections become archival holdings is essential in maintaining [fan-archivist] relationships and in developing a positive, generative community united in shared concern for game history and preservation" (p.177).

If LIS is to play a role in the future preservation of fanworks, it behoves us to keep in mind the intense relationship fans have with those works. It is also important to realise that fans have been collecting, archiving and preserving their own cultural artefacts for years, and that in many cases they have already developed a 'best practice' (sometimes pioneering) for dealing with them. Sensitivity and respect is needed, and a willingness to work collaboratively with fans should be the default mode for any future projects to preserve fanworks. There is much both fans and LIS have to offer one another – fans have passion for their collections, unique insights into how best to preserve them, and creative

solutions to working with dynamic media that memory institutions can learn from. Likewise, LIS professionals have the expertise, procedural know-how, and resources to best put any preservation efforts into effect. If there is to be a wide-ranging, concerted effort to preserve fan culture, there is much each party can and should learn from the other.

7.2. Future work

Since this research took a very broad scope as its remit, there are many aspects that require, or are suitable for, further investigation. These are as follows:

- The model of fan information behaviour presented in this thesis may be used in further research, particularly in a wide variety of fan communities, to test its validity.
- The use of tag analysis as a method for investigating information behaviour may be developed through further testing, with a view to adding the method as part of a quantitative 'toolkit' for researching information behaviour.
- The Serious Leisure Delphi variant can be used for a wide variety of research, not merely in the context of LIS, specifically focusing on the study of fans, hobbyists, enthusiasts, volunteers, and other non-professionals with expertise in a certain domain.
- Further clarification of the fan information communication chain would be beneficial, with research particularly focusing on the *discovery, management* and *analysis* stages of the chain, which were not sufficiently explored in this study. The other stages are also rich areas for further research, where the findings of this study may be tested on a wide variety of fan communities, in order to test their validity.
- Peripheral themes that emerged from the Delphi and the case studies – particularly issues of fan activism, support, charity, money-making and gender biases in fanwork production – are also deserving of further study.

- The fan-tag taxonomy (Table 23, p.243) should be validated using tag analysis in further fan-tagging contexts.

As technologies evolve and documents become more complex, we may well see a growing trend towards more participatory, multimodal and immersive texts (Robinson 2015a), which engender more fan-like engagements amongst audiences and users. If this is the case, then it becomes all the more pertinent to look at the ways in which fans interact with information and other forms of document. It is hoped that this thesis has laid the groundwork for future research in this area, work which will inspire other scholars and researchers to investigate the aspects summarised above further. Applying the model to a variety of fan communities would help to validate, refine, or test its applicability. Furthermore, additional investigation of fan-tagging behaviours, gatekeeping, money-making and entrepreneurship, and support and activism in fandom, would be desirable in order to glean a more well-rounded picture of how fans deal with fan-related information, fanworks, and the communities around them.

This is a new area of research, which nevertheless is beginning to gain interest within both fan studies and LIS (as recent developments show). Fans are becoming more interested in preserving their culture, and LIS is becoming more interested in the relationship serious leisure groups have with information. The information behaviour of fans, therefore, promises to become a more pressing concern as time progresses, and fan communities become more involved in concerted efforts to preserve their digital culture, as seen with fan-run archives such as AO3. One of the major issues within LIS currently is digital preservation, and how to combat the loss of wider digital culture. It should not ignore the digital cultures of 'outsider' groups, of which fandom is a uniquely productive, creative and innovative member.

As the writing of this thesis was being concluded, I was made aware of a paper to be published in *Journal of Documentation* later in 2017. The authors had given the journal

editor permission to mention this in-press article to me. This paper, which cites my *Journal of Information Science* article, also regards fan information behaviour as being of interest to both fan studies and LIS, and little studied by both. It identifies information activities such as collecting, organising, and wayfinding among authors of fanfiction, by a qualitative inductive analysis of writing on fanfiction platforms. This article is a further validation of the idea, central to my thesis, that information behaviour of fans is a topic worthy of study within LIS.

8. PART EIGHT – Reflection

The Ph.D. journey has been a long and difficult one – but also a uniquely rewarding one. As both a fan and a librarian, the opportunity to study in greater depth both the great passions in my life has been a most enjoyable experience. It has, of course, also been challenging – both in terms of time management and the unique kind of isolation experienced by all graduate research candidates. The release of two very relevant publications towards the end of my research was a frustration, and fed doubt about the uniqueness of my work – however, I am confident of that uniqueness, and heartened that this topic is indeed one of growing interest.

New skills were learned – particularly in conducting new and interesting research methods – the Delphi method, tag analysis and network analysis were all new to me and represented something of a learning curve, with all the associated frustrations – but they were skills well worth learning, and were ultimately extremely interesting methods of data collection providing unique insights. My greatest surprise was in learning of the 'curated folksonomy', and then later learning of its unexpected effectiveness in standardising the classification fanworks on AO3, for the most part without removing the original intent of the author/creator. This system, devised by volunteer fans, provides a model which can have wider applications, and can mitigate much of the 'messiness' of pure folksonomies.

I hope that this research will be used by future LIS scholars to discover more ways in which fans and other passionate amateurs deal with information. In particular, I hope that the new methods developed – the Serious Leisure Delphi and the tag analysis – will continue to be used and extended. What I mostly wished to achieve, however, is a dialogue between the disciplines of LIS and fan studies – a dialogue outside of the proverbial LIS 'echo chamber' – and foster a mutual cooperation between the two fields as to how best fannish digital culture can be preserved. I believe there is much both parties can learn from the other, for the benefit of both disciplines.

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Twitter conversation with [redacted]

Abridged transcript of a Twitter conversation with [redacted], 25 June 2014 (source: https://twitter.com/LudiPrice/status/481790742499958784)

[redacted] 25 Jun 2014

Q: @britishlibrary, do you or any library you know of, catalogue and classify fanfiction?

[redacted] 25 Jun 2014

[redacted] @britishlibrary I've collected and added some to the US collections overs the years. Usually subject classified by

[redacted] 25 Jun 2014

[redacted] @britishlibrary LOC subjects [fan fiction - periodicals]. Not much more granularity, tho'

[redacted] 25 Jun 2014

[redacted] Thanks! I am trying to see if fans are the only ones cataloguing fanfic. I know LoC has SH for material *about* fanfic, but not

[redacted] 25 Jun 2014

[redacted] for fanfic itself. So is it only zines that are collected?

[redacted] 25 Jun 2014

[redacted] LOC sh may have been co-opted in that case! I think zines had a lot of US lobbying. Both collected (in small amounts) at BL

[redacted] @LudiPrice 25 Jun 2014

[redacted] Only British zines, or American ones too?

[redacted] 25 Jun 2014

[redacted] I do America, so speaking about US titles. But yes, British zines also collected

[redacted] 25 Jun 2014

[redacted] Thank-you! Very helpful! Do you think it's difficult because it isn't considered 'academic'? #curious [redacted]

[redacted] 25 Jun 2014

[redacted] possibly an element of that (and this feeds into loc subject headings, cf Zines subject heading) - but mostly

[redacted] 25 Jun 2014

[redacted] the limited number of materials published, plus possibly lack of publisher guideance/blurb. - speaking personally

Appendix B – Delphi study consent form

CITY UNIVERSITY LONDON

EST 1894

CONSENT FORM

Title of Study: *Serious leisure in the digital world: exploring the information behaviours of fan communities*

Please initial box

1.	I agree to take part in the above City University London research project. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the participant information sheet, which I may keep for my records. I understand this will involve: • responding, by email, to questions asking me about personal opinions that pertain to my experiences as a fan; • making myself available for at least two rounds of questioning; • using a computer to respond to questions and to communicate with the researcher.	
2.	This information will be held and processed for the following purpose(s): • data and content analysis I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that could lead to the identification of any individual will be disclosed in any reports on the project, or to any other party. No identifiable personal data will be published. The identifiable data will not be shared with any other organisation. I understand that I will be given a transcript of data concerning me for my approval before it is included in the write-up of the research.	
3.	I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalized or disadvantaged in any way.	
4.	I agree to City University London recording and processing this information about me. I understand that this information will be used only for the purpose(s) set out in this statement and my consent is conditional on the University complying with its duties and obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998.	
5.	I agree to take part in the above study.	

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	Signature	Date

When completed, 1 copy for participant; 1 copy for researcher's file.

Appendix C – Delphi study participant information sheet

CITY UNIVERSITY LONDON

EST 1894

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Title of study *Serious leisure in the digital world: exploring the information behaviours of fan communities*

We would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether you would like to take part it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study is part of a second year Ph.D. research project. Very few studies in Library and Information Science (LIS) look into the information behaviour of fans. The purpose of the study is to develop an understanding of fan information behaviour. This will allow us to inform services offered by library and information professionals and educators. This phase of the research requires participants in a Delphi study over the period of February to approximately June 2015. The Delphi study is a study of expert attitudes and predications, which will be related to existing theories of information behaviour, and will be analysed for what they show about the relationship of fans to information.

Why have I been invited?

Participants in the panel are men and women over the age of 18 who participate in the online fandom community. Participants were either selected by the researcher via a survey of popular fansites, social media and public forums; or they responded to a call for participants on Twitter and Tumblr. Those who were selected were selected on the basis of their levels of activity in the media fandom community as measured by their online productivity, particularly in their production of fanworks and participation in related activities, such as writing fan blogs, commentaries, guides, etc.

Do I have to take part?

Participation in the project is voluntary, and you can choose not to participate in part or all of the project. You can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

What will happen if I take part?
The Delphi will begin with a first round of open-ended questions which panel members will be invited to answer in written form over a period of three weeks. The questions will pertain to the information behaviour of the panel members regarding their usual activities as fans. These responses will be emailed back to the researcher, who will then be code them into general, anonymised statements, which participants will then be invited to comment upon in a series of rounds, until a consensus is reached. A minimum of two rounds is expected, though as many as five may be necessary in order to reach consensus. Each round will last three weeks. The study will be conducted by email.

What do I have to do?
You will be required to answer some questions about how you – and other fans you know and in general – search, use, share, communicate and recycle information as a fan, which you will then email back to the researcher. When the researcher has compiled all responses and coded them into generalized statements, you will be required to comment upon these statements and return your comments to the researcher. This process will be repeated at least three times, until all participants have reached a consensus. You may leave the study at any time, upon which all previous data you have supplied to the researcher will be destroyed.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?
There are no foreseeable harms in the participation of this academic exercise.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
Participation in this study will help to better understand how fans use information in their activities, which is an area of information science that remains unexplored. The results will also help to ascertain whether fans use information in similar or different ways to other sub-sections of the population.

What will happen when the research study stops?
If the study ends unexpectedly, all data supplied by the participant will be deleted and destroyed *unless* the researcher requests consent to keep the information for academic study.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?
All data provided by the participant will be stored on the researcher's password-protected personal laptop. All data will anonymized and will not be made available to another person. Destruction of data will be required if the participant withdraws, or if the study terminates unexpectedly.

What will happen to results of the research study?
The results will be used in the writing up of this Ph.D. thesis, which may be published in an abridged form at a further date. Results may also be used for presentation in journal articles and/or conference papers. Participants may obtain a copy of the resulting thesis and/or summary of results by contacting the researcher at the appropriate email address.

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?
Participation in this academic exercise is voluntary and the participant is free to withdraw from the research at any time without prejudice. The participant need give no reason or justification for withdrawing. Ln such cases the researcher will destroy the information obtained prior to the withdrawal, unless the researcher requests for your consent to retain the records for academic study.

What if there is a problem?
If you have any problems, concerns or questions about this study, you should ask to speak to a member of the research team. If you remain unhappy and wish to complain formally, you can do this through the University complaints procedure. To complain about the study, you need to phone 020 7040 3040. You can then ask to speak to the Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee and inform them that the name of the project is: *Serious leisure in the digital world: exploring the information behaviours of fan communities.*

You could also write to the Secretary at:
Anna Ramberg
Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee
Research Office, E214
City University London
Northampton Square
London
EC1V 0HB
Email: [redacted]

City University London holds insurance policies which apply to this study. If you feel you have been harmed or injured by taking part in this study you may be eligible to claim compensation. This does not affect your legal rights to seek compensation. If you are harmed due to someone's negligence, then you may have grounds for legal action.

Who has reviewed the study?
This study has been approved by City University London Computer Science Research Ethics Committee

Further information and contact details

Ludovica Price	Lyn Robinson
Ph.D. Candidate	Ph.D. Supervisor
Ludovica.Price.1@city.ac.uk	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Appendix D – Delphi Round 1 questions

Delphi Round 1 questions

Purpose: To examine the extent to which fan information behaviour relies on or is situated in the online world.

1) To what extent is fan activity rooted in the online world? What do fans do in this realm?

Purpose: To examine the extent to which fan information behaviour relies on or is situated in the offline world (RL).

2) To what extend is fan activity rooted in the real (offline) world? What do fans do in this realm?

Purpose: To elicit the information resources used by fans

3) What sources of information do fans use? Which are the most important and why?

Purpose: To identify novel and/or unique information behaviours exhibited by fan communities.

4) In what ways are fans helpful to other fans either online or offline?

Purpose: To understand the boundaries between amateur/hobbyist information behaviours, (serious leisure), and the professional realm (making money).

5) What are the boundaries between amateur and professional 'fandom'? To what extent, and how, do fans make money or influence those who do?

Appendix E – Delphi thematic units

Thematic units

Theme 1: Fan Communities

1.1. Online community

1.1.1	The internet enables increased a) reach; b) diversity; c) visibility and; d) discussion.
1.1.2	Significant and meaningful relationships can be formed online, sometimes progressing offline.
1.1.3	The amount of online activity depends on the fandom, and in which 'realm' it is centred.
1.1.4	Online activity depends on physical location and proximity to other fans.
1.1.5	The online allows for a narrowing of physical and temporal space.
1.1.6	The online is an entry point into a fandom.
1.1.7	There is greater acceptance and normalisation of fan identity online.
1.1.8	Fans do the same things online as they do offline.
1.1.9	The online world is an information hub which fan communities grow up around.
1.1.10	Web 2.0 has enabled more dynamic interactions between fans and their fandoms.
1.1.11	Online fandom can be divided into three functions: a) social; b) creative; c) interpretive.
1.1.12	The online is better suited to sharing and finding; the offline to creating.
1.1.13	The online better serves the long tail of fandom.
1.1.14	Fans can better tailor their fan experience and identity online than offline, benefitting from greater anonymity or exposure.
1.1.15	The web is used to recruit new fans.
1.1.16	Most fan activity takes place online.

1.2. Offline community

1.2.1	Offline fans primarily engage in consumerism – buying and collecting merchandise.
1.2.2	Fans still engage in many offline activities. It's just harder to spot.
1.2.3	Offline activity depends on physical location and proximity to other fans.
1.2.4	Fans engage in semantic and enunciative production offline.
1.2.5	There are generational differences - older fans do more offline than younger fans.
1.2.6	Offline fan activity is more ephemeral, intense, and intimate, but it requires more money, time and effort.
1.2.7	Fans can recruit offline friends into a fandom.
1.2.8	Offline postal networks exist to ship over merchandise and physical fanworks.
1.2.9	The offline requires a loss of anonymity fans are not comfortable with.
1.2.10	Friendships born online are cultivated offline.
1.2.11	Many franchises are born offline, so consumption of these franchises will take place offline.
1.2.12	The offline is safer because fans don't have to put their work or fan identity on public display.

1.2.13	Offline fan activity is not as extensive as online fan activity.
1.2.14	The offline allows first-hand experience of different cultural fan practices.

1.3. Participatory culture

1.3.1		Fans engage in both small-scale and large-scale participatory activities.
1.3.2		Fans support each other in non-fandom-related aspects of their everyday lives.
1.3.3		Activities include:
	a	Feedback and criticism on fanworks.
	b	Crowdfunding fanworks and official works.
	c	Creating, organising and (if offline) going to contests, challenges, workshops, cosplay shoots, cons, panels, seminars, meetings and other events.
	d	Sharing information, news, links, recs, trivia, etc.
	e	Donating and collecting for charity and other charitable endeavours.
	f	Giving practical support to other fans, e.g. travel advice, visa applications
	g	Collaboration on fan projects.
	h	Grassroots activism, petitioning, raising awareness, etc.
	i	Moral and mental health support for other fans
	j	Both official and non-official petitions, polls social media campaigns and other events
	k	Research for fan-related projects and resource-sharing
	l	Crowdsourcing fan projects such as wikis, rec lists, etc.
	m	Networking, connecting, socialising
	n	Academic studies – questionnaires, surveys etc.
	o	Creating and evolving fan groups or communities
	p	Mentoring and teaching other fans
	q	Roleplaying (both on- and offline)
	r	'Flame wars' and other types of conflict
	s	Forming friendships
	t	Encouraging and praising fanworks
	u	Consumption and discussion of official works and fanworks
	v	Creating and sharing fanworks
	w	Contesting and rejecting official source material

1.4. Social & knowledge capital

1.4.1	Fans are collectors of information and news about their fandom and the creators of their fandom.
1.4.2	Fans can gain their own following, and get job offers due to their work.
1.4.3	In anime and manga fandoms, fan translators are particularly important as information gatekeepers and providers.
1.4.4	Certain fans act as information sources or gatekeepers for the wider fan community.
1.4.5	Not all of fandom is based on hierarchies.
1.4.6	Fandom is hierarchical and those who display more knowledge of their fandom gain more status in the fan community.

1.5. Conflict

1.5.1	There are hierarchies within fandom, some individuals being in conflict with one another.
1.5.2	Factions exist within fandoms, some in conflict with one another.
1.5.3	Social media is rife with rumour, misinformation and disinformation; fans are far more ready to believe, misinterpret and spread these online than offline.
1.5.4	Fans can be actively ignored and/or rejected by producers or creators.
1.5.5	Stigma of fans and fandom is still a problem.
1.5.6	Stigma of fans and fandom is improving.

Theme 2: Fan Information Behaviour

2.1. Communication

2.1.1		Due to the speed and easiness of communication, the internet has become the premier medium for fan communication.
2.1.2		Offline communication is still important.
2.1.3		There is evidence of a communication chain.
2.1.4		Producers and creators monitor fan communication more often nowadays.
2.1.5		The speed of online communication facilitates rumours and disputes.
2.1.6		Communication takes place for the following reasons:
	a	Spreading the word to and recruiting potential new fans.
	b	'Sharing the love'
	c	Sharing fanworks
	d	Find information and/or official and fan-made products
	e	Find new friends or make enemies
	f	Discuss and interpret ideas and fanworks
	g	To contact franchise producers/creators
	h	To research for the creation of fanworks
	i	For advocating, petitioning, canvassing and taking part in grassroots activities
	j	To communicate information
	k	To take part in contests, polls, showcases (sometimes official), etc.
	l	To form communities or groups
	m	To create and/or collaborate on projects
	n	To communicate globally in real time
	o	To spread rumours
	p	To research fandom(s) (for academic or personal purposes)
	q	To debate, argue, fight
	r	To teach and/or mentor one another
	s	To show off
	t	To reject elements of a fandom

2.2. Information seeking

2.2.1		Fans seek fandom-related information for the following reasons:
	a	To aggregate information resources to share
	b	To research and better understand their fandom
	c	To do research for a particular fan-related project
	d	To gain 'rare' or valuable information for purposes of knowledge and/or social capital.
	e	To scout out or discover something they might be interested in.
	f	To collect fanworks.
2.2.2		Depending on the fandom, fan activity and related information behaviour may be concentrated on certain platforms.
2.2.3		Some fans are lurkers and their information behaviour is invisible.
2.2.4		Official accounts and sources are given precedence over unofficial ones, and rare information is prized.
2.2.5		Online resources are favoured for speed; print and analogue resources for accuracy.
2.2.6		Other fans are an important discovery tool and source of information.
2.2.7		Fans can tailor information behaviour depending on their needs.
2.2.8		Secondary resources are also important.
2.2.9		Libraries and reading groups can be places to seek information.
2.2.10		Particular fans will act as information gatekeepers to the wider fan community.
2.2.11		Rumours, misinformation and disinformation are widespread problems on the internet.
2.2.12		Wikis are of growing importance.
2.2.13		Fandom is an information hub and a knowledge space.
2.2.14		Print can be a more effective resource – especially for art. Image search online can be cumbersome.

2.3. Information organisation

2.3.1	Fans aggregate information for other fans in the form of creating rec lists, link lists, wikis, tutorials, guides, etc.
2.3.2	Fans can work on fandom-related resources in a professional or semi-professional capacity.
2.3.3	Folksonomic classifications are useful in finding and disseminating information.
2.3.4	Finding images online can be difficult.

2.4. Resources

2.4.1	The prime resource is the source text.
2.4.2	A wide range of resources are used, whether based online, offline, or specific to neither.
2.4.3	Resources used depend on a) the fan's own preference; b) the fandom itself (e.g. accessibility and availability of sources), and; c) what the information is being used for.
2.4.4	Online resources are favoured.
2.4.5	Offline resources are favoured.

2.5. Produsage & user-generated content

2.5.1	Produsage is a large part of fandom, manifested in the creation of fanworks and other fan-related resources.
2.5.2	Collaboration and crowdsourcing is a large part of produsage activities.
2.5.3	Fans will sell, exchange, or gift their work.
2.5.4	Produsage also takes form in non-creative works such as beta-reading, reviewing, commenting, uploading photos and blogs, writing guides and walkthroughs etc.
2.5.5	Produsage can be a way of building on the source text, and/or filling in the gaps in the source text.

Theme 3: Social effect

3.1. Media industry

3.1.1	Fans influence on producers is limited mainly to their purchasing power.
3.1.2	Fan influence depends on the fandom - some franchises are more receptive to fans than others.
3.1.3	Fans are one of the main sources of generating hype and buzz for a franchise.
3.1.4	Franchise producers acknowledge fans by incorporating Easter eggs and fan service into their products.
3.1.5	Fans can keep a franchise alive, start a fan franchise or change a franchise through petitioning, campaigning, creating 'noise', publicity, leaks, lowering ratings and crowdfunding projects.
3.1.6	Social media can act as an indexing tool for fan interest in a franchise.
3.1.7	Some producers will recruit fans as 'intermediaries' between them and their fanbase.
3.1.8	Some creators will actively engage with fans and encourage fan activities.
3.1.9	Producers and creators can't engage too much with fans and fanworks due to a fear of being accused of plagiarism.
3.1.10	Fans should not have too much influence on producers as it can be detrimental to the franchise.
3.1.11	Rarely, producers will employ fans.
3.1.12	Fan activity can be 'monetized'.
3.1.13	Producers can exploit fan activity.
3.1.14	The internet makes it easier for fans to interact with producers and vice versa.
3.1.15	Younger fans expect to influence their fandoms more than older ones.
3.1.16	Fans have a big influence on producers.

3.2. Publishing & copyright

3.2.1	Fans have evolved their own editing and publishing practices.
3.2.2	Fans can work semi-professionally on professional materials, using skills not learned in a professional or academic capacity.
3.2.3	Fans can create and contribute to amateur information resources.
3.2.4	Depending on the fandom, the rights-owner will be more lenient towards fan practices and fanworks than others.
3.2.5	Some fans may repurpose their fanworks to publish their work in a mainstream capacity.

3.2.6	Attitudes to copyright differ depending on cultural background.
3.2.7	Fans can create materials on commission, but generally fandom works on a gift economy and fans prefer not to exchange money for their work.
3.2.8	Fanworks fill in gaps and provide something that regular mainstream publishing doesn't or can't.
3.2.9	Copyright is still a significant barrier to disseminating fanworks.

3.3. Education & information provision

3.3.1	Libraries and archives have a place in fandom.
3.3.2	Fans can create their own information resources.
3.3.3	Wikis are some of the most popular and useful information resources.
3.3.4	Some fans will mentor and teach novice fans new skills.
3.3.5	Fans can be motivated by their fandom to take professional classes to learn new skills.
3.3.6	Fan conventions often hold workshops and academic panels.
3.3.7	New technologies have changed how we create, edit and distribute media.

3.4. Charities, advocacy, activism and support

3.4.1	Crowdfunding is an important activity, for charitable or fan-related projects.
3.4.2	Fans can raise awareness of issues through social media campaigns and other forms of activism.
3.4.3	Fans support one another through both mental and physical problems.
3.4.4	Fans support other fans in practical ways.

3.5. Pro-ams or professional amateurs

3.5.1	Some fans act in a semi-professional capacity.
3.5.2	Fans can gain their own following, springboarding to a professional career.
3.5.3	Some 'profic' writers started out as fanfic writers.
3.5.4	Fans are not interested in money, and engage in these activities primarily out of love.
3.5.5	Fans don't make much money.

Appendix F – Information resources used by Delphi participants

Resources

Below is a list of resources cited by panel members in round one of the Delphi.

Online	Offline	Non-specific
Fanfiction.net	Art books	Primary/original source/text
Message boards	Comics	News and press releases
Fan sites	DVD extras/commentaries	Interviews
Fanart sites (e.g. deviantART)	Magazines	Articles
YouTube	TV shows/documentaries	Promotional materials
Tumblr	Library	Other fans
Twitter (official and fan accounts)	(auto)biographies	Friends/family/colleagues
Facebook (official and fan accounts)	Radio shows	Actors/agents/producers/creators
AO3	Stores and shops	Newspapers
Google Drive/Docs	Books	Scientific/academic papers
Podcasts	Movies	Fanworks
Social networking sites	CD's/records/soundtracks	Reviews (print, AV, digital etc.)
Gossip sites (e.g. Celebrity Dirty Laundry)	Overhearing fan conversations	
Screenshots (of games, movies etc.)	Teachers/professors	
Soundtracks	Reading groups	
Wikis (e.g. Wikipedia, Marvel & DC Comic Databases)	Theatre/stage/performance	
Databases	Imagination!	
Spoiler pics/lists etc.		
Mailing lists		
Archives		
Livejournal		
Rec lists/link lists		
Google search		
Mediafire/Dropbox		
Dreamwidth		
Wordpress		
Live tweeting		
Blog posts		
ComicBookResource		
Marvel.com		
Ebay		
Adultfanfic.org		
Yahoo		

Live-plays/walkthroughs/guides		
Kickstarter/Patreon/Twitch		
Instagram		
Google Translate		
Memrise		
Comicology/My Comic Shop/Midtown Comics		
Rage comics		
Memes		
Gamespot/IGN etc.		
Fic-find communities		
Cosplay.com		
Game trailers		

Participatory activities

Below is a list of the participatory activities cited by panel members in round one of the Delphi.

a	Feedback and criticism on fanworks.
b	Crowdfunding fanworks and official works.
c	Creating, organising and (if offline) going to contests, challenges, workshops, cosplay shoots, cons, panels, seminars, meetings and other events.
d	Sharing information, news, links, recs, trivia, etc.
e	Donating and collecting for charity and other charitable endeavours.
f	Giving practical support to other fans, e.g. travel advice, visa applications
g	Collaboration on fan projects.
h	Grassroots activism, petitioning, raising awareness, etc.
i	Moral and mental health support for other fans
j	Both official and non-official petitions, polls social media campaigns and other events
k	Research for fan-related projects and resource-sharing
l	Crowdsourcing fan projects such as wikis, rec lists, etc.
m	Networking, connecting, socialising
n	Academic studies – questionnaires, surveys etc.
o	Creating and evolving fan groups or communities
p	Mentoring and teaching other fans
q	Roleplaying (both on- and offline)
r	‘Flame wars’ and other types of conflict
s	Forming friendships
t	Encouraging and praising fanworks
u	Consumption and discussion of official works and fanworks
v	Creating and sharing fanworks
w	Contesting and rejecting official source material

Communication

Below is a list of reasons for communication that panel members cited in the round one of the Delphi.

a	Spreading the word to and recruiting potential new fans.
b	'Sharing the love'
c	Sharing fanworks
d	Find information and/or official and fan-made products
e	Find new friends or make enemies
f	Discuss and interpret ideas and fanworks
g	To contact franchise producers/creators
h	To research for the creation of fanworks
i	For advocating, petitioning, canvassing and taking part in grassroots activities
j	To communicate information
k	To take part in contests, polls, showcases (sometimes official), etc.
l	To form communities or groups
m	To create and/or collaborate on projects
n	To communicate globally in real time
o	To spread rumours
p	To research fandom(s) (for academic or personal purposes)
q	To debate, argue, fight
r	To teach and/or mentor one another
s	To show off
t	To reject elements of a fandom

Information seeking

Below is a list of reasons panel members cited for seeking information in round one of the Delphi.

a	To aggregate information resources to share
b	To research and better understand their fandom
c	To do research for a particular fan-related project
d	To gain 'rare' or valuable information for purposes of knowledge and/or social capital.
e	To scout out or discover something they might be interested in.
f	To collect fanworks.

Appendix G – Delphi round 1 statements – thematically coded

Participant #1

Code	Question	Statement
1.1.1	1	fans are able to connect more easily with other fans from around the world. This has increased the support of fandoms, enlarged fan bases, and has kept alive franchises that would have traditionally died without the online world.
3.1.5	1	fans of the show were able to use the Internet to continue the life of Firefly and ensure it doesn't disappear into obscurity. The show was initially kept alive online through the popular message board on Fox's website, and it provided a space for fans who shared their disappointment in the cancellation. This eventually led to various fan-driven activities such as the push for a feature film, organization of mass public screenings of the film, and even a fan- made documentary.
1.1.5	1	Essentially, the online world provides the environment for a fan community to exist that transcends physical boundaries.
1.2.1	2	In the real (offline) physical world, fans largely engage with consumerism. They buy merchandise such as tickets to conventions and movies, art books, comics, DVD's, materials to create their own fan-based costume, signed photos of the cast, t-shirts, etc.
1.2.2	2	Fans also look for opportunities such as fan conventions to engage with other fans, and perhaps even meet the creators or stars of their fan franchise.
1.2.2 1.2.10	2	In the offline world, fans are helpful to each other in sharing their love of the fandom whether it's hosting themed party nights, organizing screenings, buying and selling each other's merchandise, or even becoming real friends.
3.5.1	2	Fans can also earn money just by being a fan. For example, there is now such a thing as professional cos-players. These cos-players are arguably fans who earn money by impersonating their favourite fictional characters, and then charging other fans who want a photo with them.
2.4.1 2.4.2 2.2.4	3	It includes everything from online media (ex. Fanfiction.net, message boards, fan sites, fan art pages, etc.) to print or audio-visual material (i.e. art books, comic books, DVD's, etc.). However, the most important source is the original source in which the whole fandom is based upon. For example, you can't have fans of Rogue and Gambit without first having the X-Men comic books. Without the original source, there would be no fans.
1.3.3.a 1.3.3.v 2.1.6.c 3.2.1	4	If you are a fanfiction writer, there is a community available on fanfiction.net where you can share your writing with other fans, and then get feedback. Some fans are willing to even edit chapters for fanfiction writers prior to the writer uploading the material.
1.3.3.v 1.3.3.t 1.1.7	4	If you are an artist who likes to create fan art, there are popular websites which allow a person to share their fan art which will be appreciated by other fans. This is helpful because it provides positive reinforcement for the fan artist which also encourages them to continue with their fan art as well as generate feelings of belonging to a community in which he or she is understood.

1.3.3.b 3.4.1	5	This cannot be better exemplified by recent successful crowd-funding campaigns such as Reading Rainbow, which made over $5.4 million and it represented 540 percent of its goal, and the Veronica Mars Movie Project which raised over twice as much as it was asking ($5.7 million) and resulted in a full feature film.
1.3.3.d 3.1.12 1.1.15 2.1.6.a 3.1.3	5	with social media, it is easier to generate hype and buzz about a franchise by appealing to fans which is likely to result in more money being spent by fans and non-fans who learn of the franchise through other fans online.
3.1.1 3.1.4	5	Creators and studios are recognizing the importance of acknowledging fans' demands and catering to their requests because fans have vast purchasing power. Fans are willing to spend a lot of money on their franchises.

Participant #2

Code	Question	Statement
1.1.1	1	online platforms enable fans to communicate with each other, as well as communally create and share fanworks in the digital realm, which gives fandoms a far wider reach and diversity than they had previously, when exchanges or discussions of fanworks or the source materials could only take place via postal exchanges, fanzines and magazines, or actual meetings e.g. at conventions.
1.1.1 1.3.3.a 1.3.3.t 1.3.3.g	2	the opportunities of exchange, discussion, appreciation (or, sadly, also criticism) as well as collaborative activities like art or writing challenges reach more fans on digital platforms.
1.1.2 1.1.8	2	similar content can be created and exchanged during actual meetings (e.g. writing or art workshops, cosplay shoots, fandom or source discussions at conventions or academic seminars, ...)
1.1.2 1.2.10 1.3.3.s	2	Both in the digital and the personal (offline) realm friendships can be formed, even relationships based on fandom activities.
1.1.3	2	In my opinion, both sides of fan activity, digital and non-digital, are invaluable for fans to fully engage with each other, although it may depend on specific fandoms or fans' personal preferences which realm is preferred.
2.2.7 2.4.2	3	to learn about the latest cinematic releases, I read a (printed) cinema magazine, because it gives me a good overview without me having to look for specific reviews on the internet. I do look up certain trailers of films that interest me on platforms like youtube. If I find fandom related stuff like documentaries or reviews on television, I usually watch it.
2.2.2	3	Much of the information of the fandoms I participate in I gain from the internet, particularly tumblr (for all things BBC Sherlock related) and twitter (for many things Tolkien related).
2.3.2 3.2.2	3	I'm also involved with two Tolkien socities and read their online and print publications (in the case of the German Tolkien Society I even layout and set the latter)

2.2.2 2.2.7	3	Twitter I also use to learn about current events like fandom meetings, readings, concerts, screenigns etc. Tumblr I use for blogging purposes (mostly fanart), but also to look at fandom content produced by other fans. Fanfiction archives like A03 I use both as a reader and a writer. So I guess it very much depends on the type of content one is interested in which platform one uses as a fan.
1.3.3.u 1.3.3.v	4	"consuming" and appreciating one's own fandom creations or contributing their own
1.3.3.a 3.2.1	4	offering betaing services or constructive criticism
1.3.3.f	4	informing others about events or helping them to get tickets or offering travelling advice
1.3.3.e	4	collecting money and donating it to help out other fans with financial difficulties, or collecting for charities
1.3.3.c	4	organising meetings and events like fan-run conventions
1.3.3.f 1.3.3.i	4	protecting other fans by offering financial aid or shelter or simply a nonjudgemental ear to listen to their problems.
3.2.4	5	This depends on the fandom (as in the willingness of the producers of the source material to condone fan activities that reach into the commercial realm – some are more lenient or appreciative than others in that respect, as in my experience the Tolkien Estate and the BBC) and the individual creator. In many cases, there isn't a real boundary between fan and professional, or it's constantly shifting.
2.5.3 3.1.12 3.2.5 3.2.9 3.5.1	5	I know a number of fans who more or less make a living from fanart while operating in a legally grey area because of copyright issues, or who altered characters' names in fanfics in order to offer the stories to publishers
2.1.4 3.1.6	5	in some cases fandom activity seems to be used as an index whether a franchise should receive another season or installment. I doubt that there is a franchise nowadays the makers of which don't monitor fandom activity through platforms like twitter, tumblr, youtube or facebook, if only to gauge interest.
3.1.4	5	there are certainly fandoms where the producers either tolerate, encourage or actively seek exchange with the fans, to the point of incorporating fandom ideas or memes in their products. In some cases, awareness of the fans or nods to their activities can be seen, as in the third season of BBC Sherlock.

Participant #3

Code	Question	Statement
1.1.1 1.1.4 1.3.1 1.3.3.v 1.3.3.w 2.1.6.f	1	Here fans can write their stories and engage in discussions that would be too difficult to initiate in public or would be impossible simply because finding fans that are passionate enough to have these conversations can be difficult "IRL".
1.2.2	2	My experience with offline fandom have included little more than discussions with comic store clerks or explaining my fandom to my significant other.

2.4.1 2.4.2 1.3.3.k	3	I use my memory of cartoon episodes I saw when I was younger, actual comics, and wiki pages when I need to do in depth research.
1.3.3.a 1.3.3.t	4	For people who produce fan art, the most important thing that other fans can do for them is provide feedback and encouragement.
1.1.14	4	This support is more prevalent online because of the number of fans all gathered together in the same virtual space, the pseudo privacy fan communities have (ie. I'm not having the discussion at the dining room table with my family.), and the ability to post with a handle for additional anonymity.
1.3.3.m	4	Offline fans help one another simply by participating in conversation and exchanging ideas.
1.4.2 3.1.11	5	I have no doubt that if I could produce ground breaking fan art or fanfiction that attracted buzz outside of the internet I might be able to have some effect on my chosen franchise, but I think that is unlikely.

Participant #4

Code	Question	Statement
1.1.1 1.1.5 1.1.13	1	most social networks and sites do allow the creation of potentially endless specific places accessible from all over the world, that means, specificity of fandom online goes to amazing detail.
1.1.13	1	Fans of less popular things either flock together or are scattered around the web
1.4.4 1.5.1	1	fandoms sometimes organize in sub-circles in wich fans with the most constant presence online and the suitable attitutde assume the role of leaders/influencing people.
1.1.2 1.1.14 1.3.3.s	1	you might be surprised of how easy is to share private thoughts with strangers dragged to you just by a shared interest in something. Arbitrary doesn't mean false, though, as sharing the product of creativity is, indeed, a strongly personal experience and the demi-anonomity granted by the web allows people to dare, to share, to reveal themselves in a way they won't offline, and because of this make friends.
1.1.11 1.3.3.f 1.3.3.q 2.1.6.c	1	the online world provide the perfect frame for fans to rejoice, share their thoughts and creative work and sometimes also collide and fight.
1.1.14 1.1.3 2.1.6.f 2.2.2 2.2.7	1	The choosen platform is also important as some kind of activity and discussion is more suitable for forums for example, while other forms of expression like art and writing have dedicated sites, so the same person goes to different circles and does different things.
1.2.10 1.3.3.o 1.3.3.s	2	offline, fandom contributes to create communities and relationships that more often than not - notice that this come from someone that has met some of the most important people in her life thanks to fandom
1.2.2	2	Offline, people go to dedicated fan stores, events, theaters together and of course they share and discuss the things they found online. Depending on the area cosplay/costuming might be another significant aggregator. I am not familiar with games and rpg but I feel they should be mentioned as they are another activity fans engage in offline as much as online.

2.2.2	3	The importance of the sources depends mostly on the media and the accessibility of source material.
1.4.3 2.2.6 2.2.10	3	In anime/manga fandoms, people with knowledge of japanese are often capable of collecting informations that are unaccessible to the majority of western fans and they spread those through the community, for the joy or dismay of other fans.
2.2.4 2.4.1	3	I would say the most important source of information, anyway, remains the word of the creators, as, regardless of the fandom, is generally the most likely source of heated discussions and feuds.
1.3.1 1.3.3.d 3.5.4	4	In general, fans like to have other fans around, so they are inclined to share informations, sources and materials with other fans happily and for free, and the same happens offline.
1.3.2 1.3.3.i	4	fans are also likely to offer emotional support to each other if they hang around the same circles long enough, even when the relationship hasn't configured yet in a proper friendship
3.1.5	5	Fans often succeed in making a popular fan opinion being assimilated into the actual canon, or something they unanimously disliked being altered, and the web helps them to get together and make their voice stronger.
3.5.2 3.1.11	5	Fan also grow into creators - it is particularly evident in mainstream american comics, where the characters and scenario stay the same over decades, but it is a general tendency - and shape the media they were once fan of.
3.2.5 3.5.1 3.5.2	5	sometimes fans manage to make money with fan-produced content that stems form the original work but then gains its own popularity and follow.
3.2.7	5	Fans also share any kind of craft insipired by the media they consume, sometimes for free and sometimes in the form of actual business, costume making included.

Participant #5

Code	Question	Statement
1.1.12	1	online activity is the major source for sharing, whereas 'real' activity is for creation.
1.3.3.r 1.5.2	1	Bickering is the thing I see the most when it comes to the internet, generally over why one person's opinion is better than another's.
1.3.3.v	1	Second most common occurrence would be creativity; specifically, the sharing of fan-made art.
1.2.2	2	Cosplay and non-digital drawings would be the main activities, I believe. Personally, I know I can't pull off an accurate cosplay of my favorite characters, but incorporating subtle aspects of their personalities/costumes/ likeness into my daily regimen gives me a little boost of self-confidence. Travelling to comic cons is another popular event.
1.2.3	2	Unfortunately, the decline of comic book retailers (at least in my area of Pennsylvania and Maryland), has put a serious kibosh on having a local 'hangout' in which to meet and/or collaborate with fellow fans.

2.2.1.b 2.2.1.c	3	The internet mostly, as far as sourcing quotes and data
1.5.3 2.2.11	3	It's disturbing to see how many people assume that everything they read online is actual fact, however, as the wrong wording can completely ruin a person's career by being blown out of proportion or distorted by rabid fans.
2.2.2	3	Physical comic books, apps such as Tumblr and Twitter, art websites (DeviantArt), tv, movies and things like Netflix, Hulu and Youtube.
1.1.4 1.2.3	3	I believe physical distance and availability of the desired material is the major factor in fans using digital material to communicate.
1.2.4	4	Word of mouth remains an old standby, although it seems to apply only in densely populated areas.
1.3.1 1.3.3.a 1.3.3.t 1.3.3.w 3.2.7	4	I always appreciate constructive criticism and kind commentary on my artwork and writing, and try to do leave positive encouragement for fellow fans. Humorous parodies are also a great way to help offset disheartening "official" work.
1.3.3.m 1.4.2 2.1.6.f	5	There is plenty of aspiring talent out there who are more responsive and communicative than so-called professionals...and they put out better work, too.
3.1.1	5	Money seems to be the only important factor anymore as far as comic books are concerned. For the life of me, I can't figure out how an ongoing title that is almost universally panned by dedicated fans can still sell well enough to stay in publication. Supposedly the majority of purchasers do not ever join in active online communities to discuss plot failings, yet they continue to shell out for books that lack depth or character development.

Participant #6

Code	Question	Statement
2.2.1.f	1	I collected large amounts of fanart (art with subjects pertaining to the series I was fan of, made by people unassociated with the firm producing said series) and created my own.
1.1.11 1.3.1 1.3.3.a 1.3.3.o 1.3.3.v 2.5.1	1	I was also moderator at a very heavily populated Oekaki board. Here people have access to an online drawing program that will post the finished product directly online where others can see and comment on them. At this board we would have sub-sections which were dedicated to fanart.
1.2.1 2.2.1.f	2	I was part of the creating/collecting of fanart. This fanart would mostly entail characters from series in digital media, but it was not uncommon to find some good pieces made with paint or crayons for instance. Next to single images there are also lots of comics produced.
2.2.14 2.4.1	3	For fanart, artists would look at the original art, either concept or commercial. This would be mostly provided through online media, though back in the days (i'm soooo old ;)) you were also reliant on whatever magazines printed because the internet wasn't as large a part of our community as it is now. I was into game fanart, so I would also have access to the leaflets and booklets that would come with a game.
2.5.5	3	After you were acquainted with the visuals of the characters of the game, you would take those features and try to reproduce them in your own

		style. That was the end goal anyway, we all started out with trying to copy the official artist's work.
1.3.1 1.3.3.a 1.3.3.t	4	At the Oekaki board people could leave comments with either praise, tips or downright criticism.
1.3.3.p	4	Some of the better artists would try and help the ones that were still struggling with useful tips and tricks.
1.4.2 3.1.11 3.5.2	5	I know of some artists who received such a fanbase of their own that it lead to job offers, and I know of at least one person who was actually hired by the producers of the franchise. This is however pretty rare
3.5.4	5	I think most artists are happy to have their own friends and followers and receive nice comments on their work.

Participant #7

Code	Question	Statement
1.1.16 1.2.13	1	Today, the vast majority of fandom involves in the Internet, in one way or another. Even fans of historically offline subjects, such as sports, now use the Web to track standings, discuss player trades, and even create fantasy leagues of their own.
1.3.1 1.3.3.l 2.2.1.a 2.2.12 2.3.1 2.5.2 2.5.4 3.3.2	1	In 2005, I created an encyclopedia of comic books intended to fill a gap where Wikipedia's content was lacking, using the same wiki software used by Wikipedia itself. After only a couple short months of toiling alone, my site caught the attention of the first few visitors, some of whom which eventually became contributors themselves. Now hundreds of users help me to maintain the site, which draws millions of people each month.
1.2.10	1	While our shared fandom is comic books, after years of working together many members of the site have formed offline relationships, even vacationing together (to comic conventions, of course).
1.1.10 1.3.3.d 1.3.3.l	1	Daily interactions often involve discussing changes to the encyclopedia as a result of new developments in the comic book universe, or sometimes just sharing links with each other to art or new movie trailers we like.
1.2.2	2	Outside of the classic entertainment business (i.e. music, sports, etc.), pop culture events such as conventions, festivals, and trade shows are the fastest growing area of offline fan activity.
1.1.1 1.2.3 3.3.4	2	A former work colleague of mine is into stage fighting – that is choreographed performances of hand-to-hand combat for stage. He frequents festivals where there are workshops to hone your skills and large re-enactments to entertain other guests, which were previously only available in large urban centres because of the difficulty in arranging such events without the power of the Internet to connect people
1.2.10	2	My fellow editors and I spend the time together to eat, drink, and talk about what's happened in our lives since we last spoke. Often we will watch classic cartoons or movies together (usually involving superheroes) and have a few drinks.
3.3.6 2.4.1 1.2.1	2	During the convention hours I spend most of my time trying to meet industry professionals or attending panels, while my friends prefer to wander the show floor looking for great deals on comic books, art, or other merchandise.
1.1.14 2.2.7 2.1.6.d 2.1.6.p 2.2.1.b 2.4.2	3	I don't think there is no one source of information more important the others. Fans today use the gamut of resources at their disposal to customize their fandom as they see fit. For instance, a disproportionate number of fans that visit my websites are interested in the minutia of comic book history. They are sometimes interested in the hair colour of a character which only appeared once in a comic book from 40 years ago. Fandom has become something you define for yourself.

2.1.6.d 2.2.1.b	3	While the majority of fans limit themselves to the most popular aspects of a genre, people are increasingly immersing themselves into the depths, learning more about the personal lives of the actors who portray their favourite sci-fi character on TV, for example.
2.2.12 2.3.1	3	For comic book information, I'd like to think that most fans these days use my websites, the Marvel Database and the DC Database. There are many such encyclopedias, as well as news sites and social networks which specialize in a particular fandom or genre. Wikia, an interconnected wiki community, has set out to help fans create sites like mine for literally every conceivable fandom, and in every language.
2.2.1.b 2.2.1.a 1.3.3.l	4	The Marvel and DC Databases specifically create pages to help newcomers to comic books get started. We have created recommended reading guides, as well as glossaries, and story arc synopses, which help someone jump in, head first.
1.3.3.r 1.5.2 3.1.1 3.1.6	4	There are definitely two classes of fan, however: the elitists and the welcomers, for lack of a better term. Elitists usually want to maintain their fandom as an exclusive club. They feel that the presence of the masses will ultimately drive the content creators to pander to the lowest common denominator. The welcomers, on the other hand, espouse a more enlightened view that the influx of interest (and money) will allow creators to produce more and higher quality material, as has definitely happened in the comic book industry. These groups each carry on with their agendas, excluding and including people from and to their communities. The Internet has largely broken this wide open, reducing the power of the elitist to be able to keep their first-found love just to themselves.
1.4.2 3.5.2	5	A number of fans have managed to gather a following of their own, some eventually quitting their day jobs to work at it full time.
3.1.1	5	Currently, fans have two powerful ways to influence producers: With social media and with their wallets.
3.1.8 3.1.14	5	Typically, younger producers are more inclined to engage fans directly, sometimes even creating lasting, albeit semi-anonymous, relationships through Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram
3.1.5 3.1.6	5	Ideas put to the back-burner can suddenly ignite in social media and become a reality, much to the surprise of the producer. A recent example of this is the Deadpool movie. Wide speculation of a movie existed for years, and test footage was even shot, but ultimately shelved when the studio didn't approve. The test footage leaked and a grass roots campaign surged so quickly and strongly that the movie's approval was fast-tracked and began production shortly thereafter.
3.1.9	5	There are also a number of legal pitfalls producers must avoid when interacting with fans, such as receipt of unsolicited fan-fic materials. Producers are often scared that stories they write may be scrutinized for plagiarism if a fan could somehow prove they shared a similar idea with the producer earlier, as part of a fan-interaction.
3.1.5	5	celebrities are coming out about their interests, such Vin Diesel who still plays D&D and King Abdullah of Jordan who was such a fan of Star Trek he (successfully) lobbied to get a bit part on an episode of Star Trek: Voyager.

Participant #8

Code	Question	Statement
1.1.3	1	I think it depends on who/what you're a fan of, and how you socialise with the people who share that interest.
1.1.4 1.2.3	1	I'm usually in the position where I'm the only one in my offline life who's interested in what I'm interested in, so I go online to feed/express my interests.
2.5.2 2.5.4 3.2.3	1	I will seek out source information (usually interviews), occasionally fan theories (concerning fictional worlds). I'll write fanfic and share those stories. Sometimes I write fanfic with other fans. I'll go looking for fan art, and other fan works. Share quotes from the source. Visit websites dedication to the interest in question. I've created a couple of websites to that end myself, though primarily for hosting my fanfic.

1.1.2	1	I've made friends and close friends through interacting with other fans online too.
1.2.1 1.2.2	2	In the past I've done things like watch TV/movies, picked up the occasional magazine, bought CDs and other merch, gone to concerts. Have the occasional TV/movie marathon.
2.4.1 2.2.1.b 2.4.2 3.2.8	3	The original source material (Book, music, comic, TV show, whatever the case may be). Followed by interviews, whether text-based or audio-visual, with the creators/cast/crew/other participant. Articles, behind-the-scenes videos. Anything that gives further insight into the original source material. I like to know the meanings of songs, and that's not always apparent from reading the lyrics, for example.
1.3.3.d 1.3.3.v	4	Sharing creative works and information gathered. An offline friend of mine who knew I liked a particular band that she didn't gave me the inserts from one of her magazines once.
3.1.5	5	The only times I can think of where the fans influenced the producers is when there were large numbers of fans involved all worked up about the same thing. Gambit was restored to the X-men after fans complained. The TV show Roswell got a third season when lots of fans sent in tobasco sauce bottles to the producers as part of their campaign
3.1.10	5	I think that producers have to walk a fine line between listening to the fanbase and ignoring them. They can't ignore them completely, because then they'll lose them, but they can't listen to them all the time because let's be honest here: what we think we want isn't always what we actually want or need.

Participant #9

Code	Question	Statement
1.1.9 2.1.6.f	1	Like there's clusters and groups of fans online that act as clubs for shows, movies, books, whatever you name it. That if you're interested in something and want to discuss it seriously with other people who like that same thing? You can find groups of people online to do so.
1.1.4 1.2.3 1.3.3.f	1	There are rarely people in my real life with whom I can hold serious discussions about shows or books that I enjoy. Whenever I really get into a show or movie or book or series, I want to discuss it. I want to discuss the story, the plot development, the character development, the relationships, possible theories, the themes in the story. But I don't have anyone in RL who matches my enthusiasm. Which is why I wind up going online to find people who have that same level of enthusiasm.
3.5.4 1.3.3.v 1.3.3.a 2.5.1	1	Also fans tend to make a lot of media for the topic. They'll write fanfiction, meta, draw fanart, make edits, write songs, make badges, all in the name of love. They just love something so much that they're driven to create media inspired from it.
1.3.3.t	1	It's a really creative environment where you're pushed and encouraged to make whatever you can, however you can!
1.2.13 1.2.4 1.3.3.u 2.1.6.f 2.4.4	2	For me personally, fan activity isn't rooted a lot in the real world. At best what I've done is sit down with 1-2 friends and discuss the Game of Thrones and throw a few theories around. Or meet up with friends to watch the Veronica Mars movie once it came out or watch Avengers in the theater and follow it up with some discussion on the way back home.
2.4.2	3	There's a lot of information sources that fans use.
2.1.1 1.3.3.d 2.2.4 2.2.5	3	These days theres a lot of focus on social media as in "Did you see what this person/celeb tweeted?" or "this account posted this news so this means this!" I feels its one of the fastest ways that people are depending on to get information.
1.5.3 1.3.3.o 2.2.11 2.1.3 2.2.6	3	On the other hand this can cause a lot of problems because theres room for al ot of heresay and lying to come in because it's a big vast internet and someone can easily make a lie or rumor up and it'll pick up DESPITE the fact that theres little to evidence of it. E.g. "Dylan o'brien rumored to be new spiderman" it was JUST a rumor and yet for nearly 48 hours people were going around like it had been confirmed. People are just too fast to take such news as fact rather than waiting for confirmation.

2.2.1 2.2.4	3	sources of information can be twitter (celeb accounts, official accounts, fan run 'army' or country specific accounts), facebook, gossip and news sites, youtube interviews.
1.2.2	3	There's also print media like magazines (with their interviews).
2.2.6 2.2.1.a 2.2.10	3	The people reporting from the press room during the Comic Cons. People who go to cons and live tweet panels and stuff. People who make post con posts describing their experiences and sharing news.
2.2.5	3	When it comes to the most important source of information…. I feel its twitter these days. Especially for cons. People who are attending cons can and do share information immediately.
1.5.3 2.2.11	3	Problem is that a lot of times they have to condense the information down into 144 characters and sometimes that leaves room for interpretation. Con goes will often complain that non-con goers will take some new news and spin it into wank because "you don't understand the context! You had to be there to get it!" which I personally feel is a little unfair. When you're at an event where the overall atmosphere is positive, that is bound to influence your mood and attitude. So whatever you hear (in terms of news) chances are you will take it as positive because you're in an environment that is fostering positivity. People at home will see the same news and dissect it with comparatively less bias.
1.3.1 1.3.2 1.3.3.k 1.3.3.a 1.3.3.f 2.2.6 2.2.1.c 2.5.2	4	For me, online fans have been very helpful in helping me out whenever I'm stuck. If I can't remember some plot point or if I need a sounding board or if I need quick feedback on a story or edit or anything, its easy to find people who are willing to help. That's the biggest thing about online communities and fandom – if you're in a pinch, you will always find people rushing to help you. There wont be any time where people will not be there to help you, in ANY way.
1.3.2 1.3.3.e	4	Theres been so many instances of fandom banding together for one cause or another. The Supernatural fandom has had many instances of helping fellow fans collect money to help them with their medical bills. Its happened in the Teen Wolf fandom as well. There's also communities who have banded together with campaigns to raise money for good causes and charities – online campaigning that bleeds positively into the real world. Its happened so many times and its always an honor to be a part of such campaigns.
3.1.14	5	Ever since more and more professionals are coming online, the 4th wall between fans and the professionals has been breaking down.
1.5.4	5	I really HATE the attitude that a lot of the professionals have of talking down to their fans? Of seeing them as an entity to be used and thrown away. Its humiliating, degrading and frustrating.
3.1.3	5	People tend to forget that they're enjoying their success BECAUSE of those fans and yet they insist on treating them like rubbish.
3.1.2	5	There are so many instances where professionals will mock people who write fanfics. PUBLICALLY. Treating people who write fanfics as the punchline of really bad jokes. Its so fucking FRUSTRATING. And there have been many instances of this (like that Sherlock thing and CleverTV did one with Teen Wolf during SDCC 2014 I think)
3.1.1 3.1.5	5	they'd lost touch with what their fans wanted and the fans were walking away. And im not just talking about the online fans. Because while YES online fans began to walk out and actively discouraged ppl from watching the show, when the ratings began to fall over all? It demonstrated that the show writing had gotten poorer. To the point that regular viewers were no longer interested.
3.1.1	5	They are paying customers because if they love something? They WILL drop money on it. In terms of merchandise, dvds, CONVENTIONS. So LISTEN to them when they're talking to you. Obviously take it with a pinch of salt but when a GROUP of people is bringing up similar concerns then it is time to listen to them.

2.1.4 3.1.8	5	I feel an excellent example of professionals working well with fandom is NBC Hannibal. Bryan Fuller has been supportive of people shipping Hannigram to the point that hes said that while hannigram wont be canon but he encourages people to explore it and to make fanfics and fanart from it. Their social media team is also very humorous and interacts with fandom with a scream worthy sense of dark humor that really matches the show.
3.1.1 3.1.2	5	When it comes to influence…. I think that fans have a voice but do they REALLY influence the development of a show or story? Only partially.
3.1.10	5	I think its important to know what your fans want. But you also have to balance that with your story. If you can work what the fans want into your story then that is good. But you shouldn't listen to EVERYTHING the fans want because then you'll end up with a mess like Glee. So its important to keep touch with your fans to know what they want but do NOT compromise your creation in the process.
2.5.3 3.5.1 3.5.5	5	There isn't a lot of money to be made off franchises I mean. There's commissions and the merchandise you can sell on redbubble, society6 and the like but theres not a lot of profit margin involved.
3.5.4 3.2.8	5	I think the point there ISNT to make money. Its to make things that will allow you to show off "hey look I really like this thing so much I got stuff about it!" fans are filling in the gap in merchandising from the professional side.

Participant #10

Code	Question	Statement
1.1.16 1.3.1 1.3.3.d 1.3.3.j 1.3.3.u 2.1.1	1	The vast majority of fan activity takes place in the online world, whether it's reading fiction on ArchiveOfOurOwn, LiveJournal, or Fanfiction.net, or sharing fannish posts on Tumblr or Twitter, or making videos for YouTube.
1.1.2 1.3.3.m 1.3.3.s	1	Fans connect with other fans online and often have never met the majority of their fandom friends in person.
1.2.2 1.3.3.m 1.3.3.c	2	Most offline fan interaction comes through conventions and meetups, where fans get together to talk about or participate in activities related to their fandoms. At conventions you can expect dances, panels, guest meet and greets, signatures, the sale of fannish merchandise, and photo opportunities with guests.
2.4.2 2.2.2	3	The sources of information fans use, outside of general online media, depends on their fandom. Fans of a book series would be heavily into the print material. Fans of a TV series would use audio-visial material.
2.4.1	3	The base medium that the fandom is in is the most important because that's where canonical information about the fandom is gathered.
1.3.1 1.3.3.l 1.3.3.j	4	Fans form communities with each other and are generally helpful to one another, even if it's just referencing where a certain scene or passage can be found or providing links to recommended fiction/videos.
1.3.2 1.3.3.e	4	Fans also have helped each other with charity work through auctions, raffles, and fundraising campaigns for fans who are in need. Pretty much every recent major disaster has inspired fan auctions, where creators will offer up fiction, image manipulations, videos, etc in exchange for charitable donations to whatever cause the auction supports.
3.5.4	5	Fans participate because of love, professionals participate because of money.
3.2.4 3.2.9 3.5.1	5	Fans can make money off of fan creations (like fanart or custom products) but only if the producers allow them to and it's of questionable legality.
1.5.4 3.1.2 3.1.5	5	I'm not sure how much influence fans have besides inspiring producers of a fan franchise to keep creating more of the franchise. Producers tend to be blind to what fandom really wants most of the time, ignoring the popular relationships in favor of their own visions.

Participant #11

Code	Question	Statement
1.2.2	1	The online world has become an integral part of fan activities, but the offilne is also important. The culture of fan conventions and fan clubs, in which modern fandom is grounded, still exist today and are important platforms for fan practices.
1.1.10 1.3.1 1.3.3.m 1.3.3.v 1.3.3.w 1.3.3.d	1	Online spaces in particular, have become key to fandom the past years. Mail lists, forums and chat services were very important for fans to share content when the internet became more common in the 1990s. Fans sociallized on these platforms, discussed media content and also engaged in creative practices (e.g., exchanging fan fics or other works). Since the turn towards 2.0, fandom has also been manifested on social media such as YouTube, Facebook and Tumblr. These platforms allow for sharing and liking content easily, and rely much more on following specific individuals or groups, which creates a different dynamic than discussing content on one public community on a message board.
1.1.10 2.4.2	1	There are specific platforms which have been key in fandom and also sit between these two developments: DeviantART, Fanfiction.net, Cosplay.com and other platforms were founded just before the 2.0 turn but also have similar features of friend lists and exchanging content. Blogs such as Livejournal shouldn't be forgotten either, which were main platforms in fandom for a long time and also allowed fans to exchange content beyond the specific fandoms that they were in.
1.1.11	1	I would say that the functions can be divided 1) social functions (communicate with likeminded individuals) 2) creative functions (upload, share and share fan works) 3) Interpretive functions (deepen our knowledge of the fan texts through discussion, speculation, theories, comedy, and crossovers and memes that relate it to other works)
1.1.1 1.1.6 1.2.6	1	To summarize, fandom is not about online platforms, but it makes sharing content easier and makes fans more visible. It is easier to find each other now and it has become easier to also enter fandom. Going to a convention or fan club requires more money, time and investments. This is an easy entry point to fandom for many.
1.1.8 1.2.2	2	Offline spaces resemble online spaces, I would argue. A convention, for instance, might be organized differently but still values the social, interpretive and creative functions that I mentioned above.
1.2.6	2	What I would argue though is that offline spaces allow for more intimacy and embodiment. Performances such as cosplay are best enjoyed offline, for instance, when fans can also interact with the cosplayers that represent their favorite characters. Other important performances or rituals are getting autographs from media professionals (e.g. actors) and talking to them during panels.
1.2.1 2.2.1.f	2	Offline spaces are also key to practices such as collecting. Going to shops like Forbidden Planet or to a fan convention can also be a great way to find items that you were looking for, for a long time. This might be even more true for fans that don't have access to everything. For example, European anime fans conventions are also primary spaces of collection - they want to get hold of Japanese items, that are expensive to ship here or hard to get.
1.2.14	2	On several fan conventions that I have been too, notably Dutch and German anime conventions, food also seems to be very important. It is also about getting the cuisine of a certain country or specific formats that we have not adopted here (e.g., having a maid cafe at an anime convention.) Some fan conventions are really to connect with other cultures and nationalities too. These opportunities for cultural exchange can also occur online, but some of the practices differ.
2.4.2	3	Different media have been, and still are, integral to fandom and I have seen all of them around still.
1.2.13 2.4.2	3	Fandom used to be print-dominated but with the emergence of online cultural, digital content became more common. Audiovisual (e.g., photographs and videos) have been part of these practices for a long time. Before we made fan videos, we even had fan slide shows.
3.3.7	3	New technologies might change how we distribute, edit and even create these media, but in principle fans make use of photography, video and

		images quite a lot in their fan works. Sometimes is for reference (e.g. document a fan convention), other times it is a genre by itself (e.g. cosplay videos, cosplay photography).
1.2.2 2.5.3 3.5.1	3	This does not mean that traditional media disappeared. They add to each other. When I go to anime conventions, I still see artists selling prints, dojinshi or other things produced in traditional media, such as buttons. Many fans make their own merchandise on Etsy and elsewhere. In other words, crafting and traditional media are still part of the fan experience and I don't think that will change.
2.2.13	4	being in fandom means being in a knowledge space.
2.1.6.f 2.1.6.j 1.3.3.t 1.3.3.w	4	Other fans will help you understand a series better that you love, create references of it, jokes, and discuss it with you.
2.2.1.c 1.3.3.l 1.3.3.a 2.3.1 2.2.6 2.5.4 3.2.1	4	I find fandom most helpful for my creative practices. There are always tutorials that you can rely on, other fans that maintain Wikis, other gamers that help you on forums when you are stuck. From my personal experience, I always try my best to help other fans too and support their fan practices by betareading, uploading photos and blogs, and reviewing for a fan zine. If we don't help each other, there would be no fan culture to speak of.
1.5.1 1.5.2	4	The flipside is of course that not all fans are equally helpful and that not everyone is active, productive or nice. There are many trolls and recent events, like the Gamergate scandal, also show us that fandom is definitely one voice and that there are divided camps on certain matters, such as the representation of gender in games.
1.5.1	5	The boundaries are still there and can be very hierarchical. It depends though on what fandom we speak of.
3.1.2	5	I am a fan of the Darkwing Duck graphic novels and the writer/artist are very approachable on Tumblr and Twitter. That is different from being a fan of, say, Mad Men, a show that has a more toxic relationship with fandom because the writers misunderstood the roleplaying practices of a group of fans.
3.1.5	5	Fans can be tastemakers and influencers. We have seen great examples of that, especially when it comes down to fan activism. The fans of Firefly and Chuck, for instance, actively fought against the cancellation of their favorite shows.
3.4.1	5	The Firefly fans, in particular, also were very involved with charity.
3.1.8 3.1.13	5	Show runners might also support, or even exploit, fans through contests that allow fans to create and publish fan works.
3.1.5 3.1.4	5	influencing might even lead to changes in the story line, because fans are very vocal about some things. (And creators then might include some fan service).
3.5.5 2.5.3 3.5.1 3.5.4	5	But do fans really make money? In most cases, I don't think that much. I know a couple of cosplayers that can live from making commissions, but I think those really are exceptions. Usually, fandom is something that you do next to your day job, or you might be able to earn something on your day off. Most of us are not in it for the money.
3.1.12 3.1.13	5	there are parties that earn a lot of money from fans. Small comic shops and vendors can really get more out of their revenues, for instance, by attending fan conventions.
3.1.12	5	Fans do spend a lot of money on fandom and that can be really nice. In Japan, fans were really praised in the late 90's and early 2000's because they were investing in the economy, which was in recess. Politicians quickly realized that money could be made off foreign fans too (in fields like tourism, technology, media) and promoted the country as Cool Japan, after an article by an economist. When I think of this cultural dynamic, in other words, I think of it the other way around. Fandom is a hobby and form of leisure that can be monetized by companies and mobilized by politicians as well.

Participant #12

Code	Question	Statement
1.1.16	1	I find that active participatory fan engagement is heavily rooted in the online world since the proliferation of the Internet and the success of social media.
1.1.1 1.1.11 1.3.3.v 1.3.3.w 2.1.6.c 2.1.6.f 2.2.5	1	Wordpress and Tumblr have helped to bring together fans globally in a simple and fast area, so naturally this was going increase activity. Online, fans are able to share any form of creative expression – be it fanfic, artworks, videos, gifs. They can also just talk and share opinions on a latest episode.
1.2.13	2	A lesser extent, but perhaps only because it is harder to quantify.
1.2.2 1.2.4	2	Offline fans may re-watch episodes, create their transformative works, discuss thoughts face-to-face.
1.2.12	2	I suppose offline also offers a little bit more safety from the idea of outsiders looking in and judging fan practices.
2.4.1	3	The original 'source' as it were would, I imagine, serve as the main source of information.
2.4.2 2.2.8	3	From there this then offshoots to marketing, and to transformative works. It isn't quite a case of chicken and the egg as, in order for there to be a fandom, there must be a starting text.
3.2.9	3	the powers that be may consider themselves as more important as the 'legal owners' of a text. Whilst fans may also agree, in this day and age this notion is very easily debatable…
1.1.7 1.5.5	4	As a support system and a feeling of community. Fandom is judged harshly in society, so when fans unite it creates a sense of safety and normalcy.
3.5.5	5	I find that fans do not often make money from their fandom.
3.2.9	5	And if they do this often brings out serious issues of copyright and ownership.
3.1.2	5	The influence producers, regardless of their fandom's size relies on their willingness to actually listen.

Participant #13

Code	Question	Statement
1.1.1	1	It seems, in some ways, that fan activity has become more common online but I think that's at least partly because that's where scholars - and journalist - are looking. It's much easier to see fan practices online: Tumblr, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Reddit, etc. are all pretty public forums and if we look at One Direction fandom, for example, activity is easy to spot on Twitter.
1.2.2	1	Offline fan activity, by its very nature is harder to spot. Okay, we have conventions, sporting events, concerts, but viewing the activity requires a lot more effort. And that's for fans that participate in fannish activity. Those who don't - who might read fic but not comment, watch football on TV but not go to matches - are far harder to examine.
1.1.3	1	Fan activity does exist in the online world, and some of it can be rooted there. World of Warcraft fandom, for example, is pretty predominantly rooted online.
1.3.3.a 1.3.3.s 1.3.3.d 1.3.3.v	1	Some of the activites that take place online though, include writing, reading and editing fanfiction, creating fan videos, podcasting, playing games, talking about objects of fandom in messageboards, forums and social networks, making friends, sharing knitting and crafting patterns.
1.2.11	2	What do we mean by rooted - is it simply 'taking place' or is it 'established'? I'd suggest that while much fan activity manifests itself online the intial interest comes from an object that isn't online. So while One Direction fans, for example, might connect online, post fanfic, leave comments on YouTube, share GIFs on Tumblr, the object - the band itself - is offline and the fan activity is thus rooted in an offline object.
1.1.3 1.1.6	2	there's an argument that if a fan finds an object through online interaction, listens to music online, talks to other fans online, writes and

		comments on fic online then the activity has to be rooted in the online world because that's the fan's point of entry.
1.2.3	2	I think it depends on the fandom - and on the fan to some extent!
1.2.2 2.5.3	2	Offline activity though can include lots of things: cosplay; attending conventions; watching TV; listening to music; attending concerts; reading books; watching sports (live or on TV); making and selling crafts; fan art; filking; writing fic.
2.4.2 2.2.10	3	There are other fans, critics, reviewers, producers, actors, crew, gatekeepers (official and otherwise), fan intermediaries, the press, news segments, radio shows, podcasts, Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, other social networking sites, interviews, DVD commentaries, prefaces, biographies, autobiographies. A variety of sources including many I probably haven't listed here.
2.4.3 2.2.7	3	As for which is the most important, again I think that depends on the fan, the fandom and what the information is being used for. If it's for example, about David Duchovny's relationship with Gillian Anderson snoggers (fans who believe they're in a relationship) may listen to gossip sites like Celebrity Dirty Laundry. Fans who don't believe they're in a relationship will more than likely listen to 'official' sources like their agents or wait for an annoucement from Duchovny or Anderson themselves. On the other hand if it's an academic fan who's writing an article about The X-Files' portrayal of gender they may not use DVD commentaries or interviews with the producers because treating their words as truth isn't necesarily rigorous. So as with a lot of things I think there are a lot of variations in considering what's most important and why.
1.2.8 1.3.1 1.3.3.a 1.3.3.f 1.3.3.d 1.3.3.n 1.3.3.i 3.2.1	4	Fans have helped me by beta-reading my fic, sending me t-shirts from overseas when I haven't been able to buy them, responding to academic surveys for me, sharing links to articles I think will be interesting, meeting up for events, sharing accomodation, talking about family and personal issues, being a listening ear, offering support, sharing gifs to cheer me up.
1.3.3.b 1.3.3.j 1.3.3.f 1.3.3.a 1.3.3.i 3.2.1 3.4.2 3.4.1	4	I've helped other fans by contributing to crowdfunding campaigns, running social media campaigns, providing support for visa applications, offering suport when they're going through a bad time, beta-reading and editing fic.
1.3.3.e 1.3.3.i	4	Fans offer support online and off in a variety of ways, including contributing to - or starting - charity campaigns and in offering support through social media networks to fan who may have posted suicide notes online.
1.5.1	4	(This isn't to say that all fans are always helpful to others though!)
3.1.2	5	The boundaries are becoming more blurred, though there are still some clear divisions especially in some areas like, for example, Hollywood cinema. While in TV and music it can be easier for the boundaries to be blurred (many of Doctor Who's writers, for example, were fans when they were younger) in other areas it is a) far more difficult to break into the field and b) perhaps more hierarchical. So the boundaries are hierarchies, money, access and knowledge.
3.1.7 3.1.11 3.5.5	5	But fans are increasingly becoming professionals. Fan intermediaries like Sherlockology and X-Files News exist who have to maintain professionalism although they are also comprised of fans. They may be granted some access, and may be above the 'regular' fan in the hierarchy but the knowledge they're afforded and, crucially, the money they earn is markedly different.
3.1.12	5	Fans do make money for franchises, however, not least by virtue of being fans. Attending concerts, buying DVDs, buying a season ticket all contribute money to the franchise. Fans who attend conventions, collect merchandise, buy multiple versions of box sets, go the cinema or concerts multiple times further increase revenue.

2.1.6.j 2.1.6.c 2.1.6.a	5	Posting on social media sites, writing fanfic, talking about franchises can bring new fans on board, and with new fans can come higher ratings, the continuation of the series and higher profits.
3.1.5 3.1.14	5	In terms of influencing producers it becomes a bit more difficult to quantify I think. Fans and producers increasingly use social media to interact with each other and fan campaigns to save shows (like Chuck) have - at times - been successful. So it might be that in broad terms (like saving the series) fans have more influence than in specifics. Steven Moffat isn't likely to be persuaded to have a female Doctor by virtue of fans' tweets, for example, but the BBC might be persuaded to show a series in one go rather than splitting it halfway through.

Participant #14

Code	Question	Statement
1.1.16 1.2.13	1	I think fandom is rooted extensively in the online world, but not exclusively.
1.1.11 2.2.13 1.3.1 1.3.3.d 1.3.3.w 1.3.3.t 1.3.3.d 2.2.1.b 2.5.1 2.5.4 2.2.5	1	I see online fandom as focused on the communication of information (news about the fannish object; recent photographs/stills; new trailers; set pictures, etc.) and ideas ('meta' and/or discussion boards for parsing and debating theories, characters, issues, etc.), as well as the mutual appreciation of fan-related activity (fan fiction reading/writing; exchanging pictures of fandom crafting, including costumes for cosplay, but also models, replicas; circulating images (animated gifs, fandom-related graphic design, and particularly fan art) among fans. In this sense, the online world is the communications hub of fandom - it seems to be used specifically for the dissemination, gathering, and sharing of information, ideas, and creativity.
1.1.9 1.3.3.o 2.1.6.l	1	From there, 'communities' of the like-minded often evolve (rather than, say, "community" being inherent in online fandom, as seems often to be argued).
1.2.2 2.1.2	2	offline fandom is more pervasive than current academic discourses of fan behavior/activity might suggest. Particularly given the strong emphasis on transformative works, female fandom, and fan communities in some scholarship, we seem to have overlooked fan activity that occurs outside the aegis of fan communities - particularly where that activity isn't transformative.
3.3.1	2	Offline fandom can include participation in fan conventions (attendance, cosplay, participation in fan panels, etc.), fan tourism to meaningful sites (location shooting sites, etc.), creative activity that isn't shared or otherwise circulated online. Fans who have an offline fannish communities (through school, work, or other organizations) might also be expected to spend substantial time offline interacting with fellow fans in the flesh - face-to-face watch-alongs or reading groups is one such example.
1.1.5	3	In the past, fans were beholden to news from official sources, in the main - TV Guide, movie magazines, anime/manga guides, or even well-connected 'zines) for information; today, information is disseminated online almost instantaneously and globally
1.1.5 2.1.1 2.1.6.n	3	fans in East Asia have the same access to news (in the absence of significant language barriers), in the same 'real-time' context, as fans in Europe or the Americas.
1.4.6 2.2.1.b	3	This, I'd argue, privileges the growing role of the Internet in fandom inasmuch as information is, to my mind, one of the key ways in which fans create and maintain a sense of closeness/connectedness with the fannish object. The more information you have about the thing, the better you 'know' it, and the closer you are.
2.2.5	3	Since it's the Internet that currently disseminates information quicker and wider than any other medium, I'd say the Internet; within that, going purely on personal experience, Twitter and Tumblr seem to be even faster than other social media (what shows up on FB is often 'news' that I've seen days earlier on the other two platforms).
2.2.5	3	Images circulate quickly and efficiently on Tumblr
1.5.3 2.1.5	3	rumor and official news spread like wildfire on Twitter and Tumblr - problems in of themselves, in that sense, since the quickness of the

2.2.11 2.1.6.o		spread means it's much more difficult to control or contain untruths or information that TPTB don't want spread.
1.3.3.d 1.3.3.a 3.2.7	4	In a purely fannish context, fans direct me to fan fiction, they give me feedback (= 'payment') for my own fan fiction writing, they gift their own work
1.3.3.s	4	out of the relationships that form online there are always the handful of friends who go beyond fandom to be wonderful sources of friendship and help in their own right.
1.3.3.d 2.3.2	4	I've done fic recommending as a 'service' to a website, I've participated in fic-find communities on LJ, etc.
1.3.3.c	4	Offline, I think the most visible to me is the ways that people come together to put on a con; for my part, I've done panels at two cons, but I've also seen the enormous amount of preparation that goes into making sure that attendees have a good time - all of that is helpful, IMO.
1.3.2 1.3.3.n 1.3.3.m 1.3.3.i 2.2.1.a 2.2.6 2.3.3	4	More 'professionally', fans who know what it is that I study (mainly through my #transcultural fandom FTW tag) often send me examples that they've seen here and there; they share stories that might be relevant to my interests, and that kind of thing truly is invaluable; and it seems to come from a sense of trust? that I seem to have built with some of my Tumblr followers. I did also notice that the other day, in the wake of a family suicide that was talked about briefly on Tumblr, when I reblogged a post with suicide hotline numbers, quite a few of my followers reblogged that from me. I don't know if it was because of my situation, specifically, but I think at least some of it was motivated by that.
2.5.3 3.2.6 3.2.7	5	In the Anglo-American context, profits from fandom are intricately tied up with fans' sense of communal, non-profit, non-professional identity; interestingly, this doesn't seem to extend to fan art, but is mainly to do with fan fiction. As far as I'm concerned, it's a more utopian thing that might rightly fall by the wayside, particularly as the economics of fandom participation change (as younger people have an increasingly difficult time finding full-time, living wage-paying work, it seems perhaps only natural that they might want to take the reins of their own fanworks, as witnessed in the slowly growing number of people who will write commissions or have 'donate' buttons on their blogs).
3.1.2	5	In all truth, I think the producers of a given property probably have anywhere from a vague to an intimate awareness of what happens within (transformative) fandom - maybe a spectrum ranging from Sherlock (very little, please don't talk to us about it) to Hannibal (bring us all the fic, especially the kinky stuff). But at the end of the day, I think there are so many external factors that come into play - including network/studio prerogatives, actor prerogatives, etc. - that there simply cannot be a straight fan-to-producer line of influence.
3.1.10	5	maybe this is my age talking, I don't think there should be a kind of slavish, 'whatever the fans want' kind of relationship with producers.
3.1.15	5	I think in the main many fans are happy simply to be left to their/our own devices. The drive to have a ship become canonical, for example, while it's happened in the past, seems particularly related to a younger generation of fans, and I think maybe there are also generational tensions between fans/producers that drive some antagonism on both sides…?

Participant #15

Code	Question	Statement
1.1.3 1.3.3.j 2.1.6.j 2.1.6.f	1	Being a theatre fan primarily the online world is used for communication of information and some reflection/discussion of productions. This is primarily rooted in message boards or personal social media/twitter exchanges.
1.1.11	1	When I think of 'fandom' more broadly and the areas I'm familiar with I think that those fandoms (mainly TV and film) are rooted primarily in the online world with more emphasis on online practices such as creating/sharing fan fiction/fan art as well as engaging in discussion.
1.2.2	2	fan activity is primarily rooted in the offline world-in attending live theatre events, in meeting with actors at the stage door after shows, and

		engaging in arranged meet ups with other fans at particular shows or events. It is also rooted in offline world events such as CD or book signings, post show talks and other live engagement events.
1.2.13	2	In other fandoms I am aware of I'd say little of the fan activity is rooted in the offline world, with conventions being the only 'organized' exception
2.2.4	3	Increasingly resources such as twitter have become the dominant voices. Professional/Official websites also have an influence and their associated twitters/Facebook.
1.4.6 1.4.4 2.2.10	3	However I think dominant fan voices do also emerge and become sources of information. Such as in Cardiff when Doctor Who is filming there are certain 'key' fans who are sources of information on this. Likewise in theatre, when information about productions is released I know of certain 'key' fans for different theatres/performers etc who will have information.
2.2.4	3	there are also key 'offical' news sources such as websites like 'What's on Stage' and 'The Stage' as well as performer's official accounts which have become key in information sources.
1.3.3.d 2.1.6.j 2.2.6	4	I find people very willing to share information as soon as they have it.
1.3.3.f 1.3.3s	4	I also find people helpful with things like sourcing tickets/selling them on to people who they know will appreciate it (fellow fans) rather than returning them to the box office etc. I also find theatre fans very helpful in the theatre environment, for example in queuing for a sold out show ticket fans will hold places/bring coffee/strike up friendships with fellow fans. IN getting hold of hard to get tickets there is also a helpful air, people willing to buy one more than they need or giving an unwanted ticket to someone they know will appreciate it etc.
1.3.2 1.3.3.f	4	In terms of fans travelling around the world to visit theatre (mostly NY or London) native fans will offer detailed guidance on both the theatres themselves but also the city and other things travelling fans may need.
1.3.3.r	4	I find media fans less helpful, with more of an edge of hierarchy to them, or at least cliques within fandom which I have always felt on the outside of, and ultimately means I don't wish to engage with this kind of fandom.
3.1.1 3.1.2	5	I don't really have direct experience of any fan influencing producers. In theatre it's quite a removed process and the engagements are vastly different. In other fandoms I'm aware of, while there may be actors/producers that engage directly with the fans I don't believe I've seen anything that could be regarded as direct influence on the franchise.

Participant #16

Code	Question	Statement
1.1.10 1.1.16	1	Well, "Fandom" like with a capital "F" is rooted very strongly in the online world at this point. It's how we connect and share and communicate at this point, as the zines of the past were how fandoms connected with eachother.
1.1.1 1.1.6 1.1.9 1.1.15 1.3.1 1.3.3.v 1.3.3.d 1.3.3.o 2.1.1 2.1.6.f 2.1.6.a 2.1.6.c	1	We create: fanfic, fanart, fanvids, headcanons, metas, theories, posts full of gifs expressing specific traits of our favorite characters. We do everything in the online space. It's how we share, how we build, how we critique and interpret, and how we just increase our universe. We engulf other people into our fandoms via the online world--I for one would never have watched Supernatural if I hadn't been engaged in Tumblr fandoms.
1.1.2 1.1.7 1.1.10	1	I've stayed in the fandom because of my online connections, and the online resources for our fandom. I probably would've anyway, but I would have been much lonelier, and felt like much more of an outcast (which I have experienced in my fandoms when I was much younger and the

		internet existed, but didn't have such profound and easy channels as social media).
1.2.6	2	It certainly exists. Take conventions as an example. But they're like a decadent garnish rather than the meat of a fandom. They supplement and indeed provide fuel for a fandom, but the meat of it all is in day-to-day interactions between individual fans. In real space, we do a lot of the same things, but it's more concentrated, more intense, because there's not a lot of time, and also people are really excited and nervous to be doing this in real life. But it's quick and intense, and that can fade fast. My online interactions have proven more solid and sustainable.
2.4.2	3	fans use everything. The source material, outtakes, episode/movie commentary, interviews, spoiler pics, you name it, we use it.
2.2.4 2.2.8 2.4.1	3	I suppose source material is the most important, but the others also influence us and solidify our opinions and fanons and concepts of canon. Source material (episodes/movies/anything officially pronounced canon) are the basis for all our endeavors. They're the basis for our understanding of character, of the story, of canon itself. We can extrapolate from that (and hell yeah we do because half the time we have a better understanding of what's going on than the actors/writers/ptb), but the source material is what inspires us in the first place.
1.3.2 1.3.3.e	4	in the spn fandom at least, I've literally seen fans pull together to save other people's lives. I've seen a fan ask for financial help to save them from a certain-death disease, and I've seen the fandom come through and raise tens of thousands of dollars to save that person.
1.3.2 1.3.3.f 1.3.3.i	4	On a smaller but no less significant scale, I've seen fandom band together to locate missing persons, to stop people from committing suicide, to provide shelter and help from an abusive environment. I've seen fandom share so much love and knowledge and assistance, it's astonishing. Fans primarily love a thing, and when hey see someone else who loves it, they love that person until proven they shouldn't. They support other fans, and they look out for them. Honestly, I've never seen such generous and supportive people than I have within fandom.
1.5.4	5	Writers are going to write what they want, ultimately, regardless of what fans want.
3.1.2	5	But some franchises do seem to make at least a marginal effort to take fan desires into account (ie, Supernatural). Fans don't ultimately hold much of any power over the plot, though.

Participant #17

Code	Question	Statement
1.1.4 2.2.7	1	I don't know how to quantify an amount of fandom activity online. I will say a large portion -- probably 99 percent of mine -- is based online, purely because of logistics.
1.1.2	1	I have made friends in those places who have translated into real-life to some degree. We email (usually via gmail) and talk about life, not just fandom, though fandom remains a big part of it. At the same time, the fact that most of that happens online is purely logistics. I would meet these people in person if the opportunity arose.
1.1.4 1.2.3	1	most of my fandom activity is online because, where I live, I have not managed to find anyone interested in my fandom to the extent that I am. I wasn't even really online -- got on long enough to check my email most days -- before fandom. But the lack of available information about my fandom interests in my town were practically non-existent and I went online, googling for anything I could find, out of desperation. I've been there ever since (three or four years now).
1.1.11 1.1.1 1.1.2 1.3.1 1.3.3.d 1.3.3.v 1.3.3.r 1.3.3.s	1	What do we do online? We talk about our fandom, share news about our fandom and the people/actors/creators involved in it. We support those people/actors/creators and try to show them we appreciate their work. (Well, most of us do. There are some problematic ones.) We post and reblog related photos. We write meta and fic to address questions found in fandom or simply to expand on the stories. We make friends, we offer support when others need it. We share.

1.1.7 1.3.3.i	1	We assure each other that we're not as odd as some would have us believe because we are so dedicated to a particular show/movie/etc.
1.2.10	2	I have been to a fandom-specific con -- because I wanted to meet the people with whom I've been talking online. If those people lived closer to me, I'm sure we'd get together more often than once a year. While there, I sat in on panels discussing the fandom (I wasn't on the panel, just in the audience), watched others cosplay favorite characters, bought merchandise at the vendors' booths. Some people wrote fic (I was too busy trying to meet everyone to stop and try to write).
1.2.1 1.2.2 2.5.1	2	I go to movies in real life because they're related to the people key to my fandom. I buy magazines and books and other merchandise specific to my fandom. I'm currently designing a quilt specific to my fandom, because quilting is something I do in real life. My quilting friends have nothing to do with my fandom, other than knowing the basics. They know about my quilt.
1.3.3.e 3.4.1	2	I make charitable donations in honor of the people who are key to my fandom.
2.4.2	3	We rely on each other, on online media, on print and TV, Twitter, etc.
2.1.3	3	Tumblr is a huge component, because there's a lot of information passed around there. Twitter also is helpful, because it gives us access to the people who are key to the fandom, the actors and creators. If they send out a tweet about filming, that's scooped up pretty quickly and fed to Tumblr.
2.2.8 1.3.3.g 2.1.6.m 2.5.2	3	AO3 also is invaluable from a fic standpoint, and gmail is huge, primarily because it's so easy to write fic in Google Drive and share the docs with others for feedback/editing. It also keeps the fic in my Google account, behind a password, rather than somewhere in a Word doc on my desktop, where my kids or husband could find it.
2.4.1	3	When pertinent, we go back to canon -- the original stories by the original author, if there is one.
1.3.3.i	4	The support of fandom friends is invaluable. We help each other when we're having a bad day, whether it's a legitimately bad day or just a rough day or a seriously bad I'm-worried-about-you day.
1.3.2 1.3.3.f	4	We offer support when someone needs encouragement to step outside their comfort zone and try something new. I am making a trip this autumn that I've always wanted to make but never really thought I'd manage -- because I watched others in fandom overcome setbacks to make things they wanted become realities and decided that, if they could do it, I could. And when I told people, they were -- and are -- supportive. I'm now planning to meet up with some people in the fandom who live where I will be traveling -- and the odds of my ever having met these people, let alone becoming their friend, are slim if you take away the fact that the Internet made it possible for us to "meet" there first. They've offered me advice on where to stay and what to visit while I'm there. It's very helpful!
3.1.10	5	I would like to think we don't influence the creators, because I fell in love with the original thing those people created -- before it had fans to influence it. If they start creating their thing based on what they think we want, they've missed the point, because I want to know what they want to do with the franchise.
3.1.1	5	But I buy as much fandom-related merchandise as I can -- DVDs, soundtracks, books, etc.
2.1.6.g 2.2.1.b 3.1.14	5	I do know that we're closer to the creators than fans have ever been able to be in the past. We can respond to their tweets about filming or simply toss our ideas at them via a tweet of our own
3.1.3	5	It's both positive -- keeps excitement up for the fans and makes them feel more a part of this thing to which they've given such a huge chunk of their lives
3.1.10	5	and negative, because some of them can be too demanding of the creators and, perhaps, influence them in ways they wouldn't have been without that interaction.

Participant #18

Code	Question	Statement
1.1.16 1.2.13	1	I think that fan activity is mostly rooted in the online world, and that this has increasingly become true since the early 1990s when the internet became available to the public at large
1.1.1 1.1.2 1.1.4	1	Fans aren't limited to engaging with their local fan communities or once-a-year conventions anymore. We can connect online to talk about our fandom, share fanart, fanfic and fanvids, plan to meet one another, trade ideas, and become friends. And of course more recently, we can watch canon works online (if you're a fan of a TV show or movie).
1.2.2	2	I think a lot fan activity still takes place in the offline world.
1.2.10	2	I have lots of face-to-face conversations with friends about the media we like. We go to the movies together, talk about this stuff in class, share books and DVDs and comic books. I've never been to a con, but I have several friends who go to DragonCon in Atlanta every year, and they work all year on their costumes and plan to meet up with other fans from all over in the offline world.
1.2.11	2	a lot of media that generates fan communities (TV shows, movies, books, comic books, etc.) gets made in the real world. Or as a fan of a lot of bands, I go see them in concert in the offline world.
2.4.2	3	Information sources could include so many things!
2.2.6	3	For me, they might include my friends, my parents, my brother, my teachers/professors, and my work colleagues – I've discovered media or had conversations about things I'm a fan of with all of those people.
2.2.4 2.4.1 2.2.1.b	3	I also look to creators to discover new things – if my favorite musician is a fan of another band, and talks about that in an interview, I will go check that out. Or if they talk about an author, or some other media. I first read Tolkien because I wanted to know what Robert Plant was singing about (in Led Zeppelin's second and fourth albums.)
2.1.6.d	3	I also read reviews on a lot of websites – I like the AV Club for TV and movie reviews. I read the New York Times for book reviews and other news (though I rarely read those books, as I'm more of a sf/f fan. But it helps me keep up with the book world in general.) Sometimes I read the Los Angeles or the London Book Review. I've recently started reading tor.com and io9, where I get to read about books and other media in the science fiction and fantasy worlds.
1.2.13 3.3.1	3	I used to find books by going to the bookstore and looking at the latest on the young adult and sf/f shelves, which is not really something I do anymore (in our post-Amazon world).
2.2.6	3	I also find things recommended by friends on social media – stuff recommended by people that I know on facebook, or by other fans that I follow on tumblr. Or I've started reading a few blogs by authors that I like. And if I'm looking for fanfic, I can get recs on tumblr or by searching tags on AO3.
2.4.3	3	Different sources have been more or less important at different times in my life
2.2.1.b 2.2.1.e	3	Later I did my own research – music magazines like Rolling Stone and their associated publications for bands, both contemporary and older. I discovered some stuff through classes that I took in high school, college, and grad school. I sometimes found TV shows by reading magazines like TV Guide (against, before the internets really took off), or decided I wanted to see a film by its trailer.
2.2.6 2.2.7	3	These days I mostly discover things through online sources – what tv show is everyone talking about? I'll read a review and decide if I want to see it, and then I'll probably watch it online. Same with films and their trailers. If a blog I like recommends a book, I'll read a the first few pages on amazon or an excerpt on a website if there is one. And then I'll check to see if the public library has a copy. Fanfic recs from authors I like on tumblr. Etc.
3.3.1	3	I'll check to see if the public library has a copy.
2.2.2	3	I'm not really into Twitter, but I know that's a huge for some fans/fandoms, so definitely that as well.
3.1.3	4	Access, encouragement, and enthusiasm. It's really great to see people who are as excited or obsessed or caught up in a thing as I am.

1.3.1 1.3.3.d 1.3.3.v 1.3.3.k 2.1.6.f 2.1.6.h 2.1.6.j 2.2.6	4	Fans share information about media, write fic, make art, and give each other a space to talk about the things they love. If you're writing a fic and you've got a question, you can ask your friends/followers, and someone can help you out.
1.3.2 1.3.3.h 1.3.3.e 1.3.3.c 3.4.1 3.4.2	4	Fans also donate to charities and organize events and support various causes, and that can include helping other fans. They can signal boost various issues on social media and raise awareness.
2.1.6.g 2.1.6.i 3.1.5	5	fans are talking back to professional creators in a way that seems to be getting a lot of attention. I feel like I've seen a lot of criticism from fans (and sometimes other professionals) of certain creators or works that may – MAY – be influencing the works. Like criticizing a TV show's depiction of women or people of color, and advocating for more and better minority representation. … fans can encourage each other to support a thing that is better about minority representation, or point each other in the direction or works that do a good or better job at that. I still think we're in an uphill climb if these are the values that fans want to see represented, but I'm really happy that people are advocating for that.
1.5.2 2.1.6.q	5	There's a lot of pushback, certainly, and people are getting harassed online (especially women) in some really awful ways, but I'm glad to see people speaking up for these things.
1.5.4	5	Some franchises don't have to listen, of course, but maybe some will start? I guess that remains to be seen.

Participant #19

Code	Question	Statement
1.1.6 1.1.2	1	In my personal experience, most of my fannish activities occur online. I came into fandom in the late 90s via a TV show web site that also hosted fan fiction, and from there discovered mailing lists, central archives, later fannish blogs, etc etc
1.2.2 2.2.3	1	lurked for a long time and when I made friends I met most of them initially online. I do participate in some offline fannish activities (mostly conferences/cons), but I have met more people online I followed offline than vice versa.
1.1.8 1.1.2 1.3.1 1.3.3.w 1.3.3.s 1.3.3.r 1.3.3.v 2.1.6.f 2.1.6.e 2.1.6.c 2.5.1 2.5.4	1	What do fans do? Everything they did offline and more: fanfic, fan art, fan vids, meta, talking about the show, the characters, the worlds, themselves, making friends and enemies, critiquing the shows and books and fan works. Even physical fannish engagements (i.e., cosplay) are shared online via videos and/or pictures, esp. since Tumbklr.
1.1.10 1.1.5 1.3.3.g 1.3.3.c 1.3.3.a 2.5.2 2.5.4	2	Most of what I do fannishly and academically is written or, at most multimedia (vids, podfic, fan art), so the production occurs via (or is helped with) computers and online tools. Cowriting is much easier when two people can access a google doc; challenges or fests are planned in a shared online meeting space or over Skype/IM and then get organized over shared docs; betaing of vids and podfic is easier when you can upload material fast and share it easily.
1.1.5	2	Meanwhile, we tend to have access to the shows via downloads/streams if they show in another country or even when we watch life and DVR to easily replay.

1.2.5	2	Offline was more important before easy online access and can still be a primary mode or enhance the digital mode (meeting other fans by visiting them, regular meetups, cons).
1.2.7	2	Some fans bring their RL friends into fandom and go online together.
2.3.1 2.3.3 2.2.1.a 2.2.6	3	I use news, entertainment news, my DW/LJ and Tumblr blogs which often post links by other fans to interesting stuff. I use google to search things, mediafire and dropbox to share stuff and google docs to collaborate.
1.3.2 1.3.3.f 1.3.3.e 1.3.3.i 1.3.3.t 1.3.3.m 1.3.3.a 3.2.1	4	Personal, professional, and everything in between. Helping find an apartment, supporting emotionally and/or financially through crises, helping write that CV and writing the recommendation where appropriate. Networking and proofreading and editing and cheerleading for fannish and professional projects. Sending hugs and sweets and goods virtually or showing up and giving support literally. And so much more!!!
3.1.12	5	Some fans make money—fewer than I'd like and usually in ways I don't like.
3.5.4 3.2.4	5	I'm perfectly happy to be fannish as a hobby and not engage with TPTB. Because even when some fans move into the higher echelons, it tends to be heavily gendered, and more often than not, some fannish expressions have to be given up along the way (you may write fanfic for my property, but only if it's not NC17, not whatever...). Fandom for me is about coloring outside the lines, and its beauty is free expression, so I'm usually not willing to give that up for a seat at a table I don't care about in the first place.

Participant #20

Code	Question	Statement
1.1.1 1.1.6 1.1.14 1.1.16	1	Fan activity today is mostly rooted in the online world today probably because it's so easy to find and communicate with other fans and for some people, starting fans and those who enjoy the comfort of anonymity and online personas. I don't think it exists completely in the online world but it has definitely made it easier for fans to engage in fan activity.
1.3.1 1..3.3.w 1.3.3.a 1.3.3.v 1.3.3.l 1.3.3.q 2.3.1 2.2.1.a 2.5.1 2.5.2 2.5.4	1	Activities that fans engage in within the online realm: discussing fandoms or making speculations, reviews, making podcasts, sharing fanworks (fanfiction, fanart, fanmusic, fanvideos) that they have created privately, selling/purchasing fanworks or merch, collaborating with other artists, planning events that could either take place online or offline, sharing translations for non-native language works, making guides or summaries/wikis, consuming fanworks, roleplaying, compiling a blog of all gifs and pictures of a single character in a series
1.2.11 1.2.3 1.2.13	2	I think most fan activity begins offline, when individuals create in their own private space (while the online world is used for sharing the works created or to find other fans/resources). I don't think it makes up the majority of the fan activity that occurs today however. A fan being more active offline would probably depend on how many other fans they can find in their locality
1.2.2	2	Activities that fan do offline: Go to events (either hosted by creators of the media or by other fans), create events such as conventions, meet up other local fans, create works privately (I'm not sure if this counts as offline however?), Cosplay/live roleplaying,
1.2.6 1.2.4	2	I feel like most offline activities is more for socializing with other fans or for going to events.
1.4.4 1.4.3 2.2.10	3	I think within fandom communities, especially if they are not big fandoms, there are usually a few key people or resources that a fan will use to find more information about the work. For example for one of the manga fandoms I follow there are two people that tweet/blog translations and updates (plus a group that translates) and most of the fans follow them and treat them as the main source for updates.

2.2.8 3.3.6	3	Other resources would be official websites, unofficial/fan made wikis, forums, podcasts (for discussions), youtube channels (especially for game fandoms, they can be either liveplays or help videos), guides for games, official or fan-made magazines, conventions (for panels/updates/new releases).
2.2.1.c 3.3.5	3	When it comes to improving their own skills or abilities to enjoy a work more many of them will look for resources both online and offline to improve their ability to draw or bake for example. That will include books, classes/lessons, online resources, other fans sharing information, etc. For those who enjoy non-native language works many of them rely on google translate but there's also a growing number of people who will take language lessons (or learn new languages on websites like memrise) so they are able to enjoy the work themselves.
2.2.12	3	As for which are the most important; it would usually be the few key resources (either people, guides, wikis, it's usually wikis) to provide them with updates or help
2.2.6 2.2.10 2.2.1.a 2.1.6.r 2.1.6.j 3.3.4	3	I think essentially the most important resource are other fans within the community. Many of them are willing to share what they know, create resource guides and teach each other and that information is then further communicated to others. It's very easy for them to put a question up on a forum or ask another fan and there are many people willing to answer their query or pass it along to someone else who can answer them
1.3.3.d 3.5.4 3.2.1	4	I think those who translate are the most impressive as they are willing to provide translations purely so they can share the news with other fans and they don't expect much in return.
1.3.3.t 1.3.3.p	4	Fans are good at encouraging each other to create and to share and it can be something like teaching each other how to draw or sharing headcanons. They encourage learning new skills, picking up information, many of them would compile resource guides or list down all the facts of a particular subject/plot/character.
3.1.2	5	The amount of influence fans have on a producer probably depends on the producer and how much they communicate/interact with fans.
3.1.4	5	some series react to fans positively or respond to them through the works (like mentioning popular fan references in their works
3.1.16	5	I think fans had always had a large influence and I feel like a lot of new works are created following popular trends in fans.
3.1.1 3.1.12	5	If creative industries don't attempt to observe fans or fan creation I feel like they would be missing out on potential ideas that would sell well.
2.2.6 3.1.12	5	I also think fan creators are a very successful type of advertising, speaking from experience I went and looked into many new series and comics after looking at fanart and fanfiction made by artists/writers that I liked.

Participant #21

Code	Question	Statement
1.1.16	1	I have to say deeply engrossed in the online world. Member of several comic book sites. Such as comic book resource, Marvel.com, tumblr, also read fan fic about my favorites superheroes. I will spend several hours on these and other sites. Also play some online games where you become your favorite superhero.
1.2.1 2.2.1.f	2	I do collect comic books and art. I try to collect sign comics.
1.2.3	2	I have not been to a comic con or dress as cosplay but only because of where I live and distance.
1.2.1 1.2.4	2	I do discuss what is happening in the comic world with non readers and also I do go see the movies.
2.4.2	3	Comic book resource, Marvel.com, tumblr, Fanfic.com, facebook. Adult fan fic.org. , Comicology, Midtown Comics, My Comic Shop, Ebay, The local comic book store, even Yahoo.
1.1.2	3	I have met online some good friends.
2.5.5 2.2.7 3.2.8	3	Fanfic because I enjoy reading and I enjoy my comics but sometimes the comics don't go the way I want it to and the fanfic will go there.

1.3.3.w	4	Its nice to share your likes and dislikes with others. I also like that I find other female comic books fans in a field that is driven to serve the male readers and we share our feels about an issue of about a character.
1.1.7	4	I don't feel such a weirdo when I know others are out there like me.
1.3.3.v 3.2.8	4	I also get to see great art and read great stories that we might not get to cause these people don't have there stuff display in a museum or publish in a book somewhere.
3.5.1	5	I guess fans could make money when they go to cons. a lot and get several things signed and sell them on auctions site.
3.1.1 3.1.5	5	I don't think there is much influence on publishers like there used to be. I see complaints about an artist but that artist is still doing the books. same goes with writers. Unless there is a united front about a character nothing really changes.
3.1.1	5	Just like the death of Wolverine there is a timeline when he will come back Marvel will not let there cash cow die. If sales do go down it might fast track the time he is dead.

Participant #22

Code	Question	Statement
1.1.16	1	I think fan activity is deeply rooted in the online world.
2.1.6.d 2.1.6.b 2.1.6.e	1	Fans often connect to the Internet to obtain (often illegally) a view of foreign cultural products (eg. : anime) or to share their love for the fandom (fanfictions, fanarts, videos...) and find friends to share with them.
?	2	I think fan activity in more or less rooted in the offline world than the online world.
1.2.4	2	If fans show their love for the fandom, it's mostly by wearing items related to the fandom (t-shirt, jewelry, other accessories...).
2.2.8	3	Internet, mostly. We can obtain information with the Facebook or Twitter official account of our favorite TV series or follow a website made by fans.
2.2.4 2.2.1.b	3	Official accounts are important because it strenghten ties between producers and fans.
1.3.1 1.3.3.a	4	Fans can help other fans by giving them feedback about their art
1.3.2 1.3.3.i	4	or even moral support about their personal life.
3.1.14	5	Compared to the past, the boundaries are thinner between the fan and the professional, thanks to social media.
1.3.1 1.3.3.j 3.1.5	5	Fans can collaborate on the development of specific merchandise (by creating them or by voting them) or show love for their fandom by signing a petition for renewal of a TV series.

Participant #23

Code	Question	Statement
2.4.2	1	There is a huge amount of online Communities, Blogs, webpages with archived material (ie Comic book covers, TV episodes comments etc), youtube channels, facebook groups/pages, a forum where members discuss fan-related staff or is created in favour of a hero or in favour of a relationship, fanfiction stories and artwork.
1.2.9	2	Some times fans are less expressive in real life than in internet, because they no longer have the anonymity card. Some could be ashamed of what they like ie reading slash fanfiction.
1.2.1 1.2.2	2	Fan attend meetups, conferences - mainly comiccons - visit perhaps themed based cafes, stores, restaurants, etc, and buy/sell paraphernalia with characters or material from the movie/book/TV series, make Halloween/carnival costumes.
2.3.1	3	People who have been longtime fans and have gathered material due to their longtime fanbased actions
2.4.2	3	Online databases/ archives of material (ie comic book covers, scanned comic book panels, episode recaps), collected books/Dvds,etc
2.2.6	3	ask questions to other online community members to receive answers

1.3.1 1.3.3.d 1.3.3.v 1.3.3.j	4	Lend/send material, point to sources for information-material gathering, share personal collection, endorse efforts related to fan based activity ie promote a blog about a pair of characters that an online fan "friend" made
1.2.1 1.3.3.j	4	many become friends online.
3.5.1 3.2.2	5	Some fans may get a professional opportunity due to their presence in fan communities, ie start writing reviews for comic book issues in exchange of money. i think this is where you stop being a fan and start becoming a professional, when you start making real money from your fan activity OR have other benefits that are countable.
2.5.3 3.5.1	5	Some fans sell their created artwork/stories, after receiving encouragement from the fan community
3.5.4	5	most do it just to cover the costs of creating something and not to gain money through it.
3.1.5	5	Many fans may organise themselves and start asking the official franchise to change the official story because of fan demand, this depends on how large is the fan base is of course. There have been name changes in characters, status quo changes in a universe due to the response of fans,ie current Marvel comic book developments that are deeply affected by the movies.

Participant #24

Code	Question	Statement
1.1.10 1.1.16	1	I would say that Fan activity at this point in history could not exist without online platforms to connect fans and allow us to express our fannishness.
2.1.6.f	1	This is where we come to discuss the media we are fans of, to express our feelings - sometimes in incoherent keyboard smashing, to share our fanworks and find ike minded people.
1.1.7	1	I don't think I would feel normalized or valued as a fan without people online to connect with.
1.2.11	2	I think that the basic things that make us fans are rooted in this - actually watching the tv show or movie. The same goes for the creation of fanworks.
1.2.3 1.2.10	2	But it's rare to get to opportunity to connect with fans offline, though it's incredibly rewarding. Fan meet up and especially conventions are generally great spaces to meet other fans and be passionate about the media.
1.2.4	2	things like cosplay are better appreciated in person, as are group discussions and of course actually meeting the objects of fannish devotion.
2.3.1 2.3.3	3	I think the biggest source for fans are tumblr, Ao3 and various wikis that are fan run. The first step in a fandom for me is to check out the tumblr tag and then dive into some fic. Twitter is also good for finiding information about specific people.3
2.2.12	3	Wikis are great crowd-sourced resources that I think are unappreciated.
1.3.2 1.3.3.i 3.4.3	4	Emotional support is a huge part of online fandom, Very often you make friends who you can't physically console, but you can be there for them digitally. Fan communities are very much supportive places where people can discuss mental health, sexuality and illness with caring people.
1.3.3.s	4	I have met pople online and become friends with them off line, I've also done random acts of kindness inspired by fandom offline.
3.1.1	5	I don't think fans quite have the influence they think they do on writers and producers. Most fans don't seem to understand how long it takes to make an episode of television or a movie, and so they think that when a character is written off it's becuase of them, even if that was planned months before the series started airing.
2.1.4 3.1.6 3.1.14	5	I think social media has allowed producers to interact more and be more cognizant of general fan concerns and dislikes, but let's be honest if the producers did what we said there would be so much more gay sex on network tv.

Participant #25

Code	Question	Statement
1.1.8 1.3.3.o	1	I think fan communities form for many of the same reasons as offline relationships, but the sheer volume of connections you can make online based on common interests alone is overwhelming and, in its own strange way, addictive.
1.1.14	1	There's a sense of security in constructing an online personality and, if you prefer, maintaining anonymity while partaking in whatever fannish activities you enjoy. Plenty of my friends are extremely vigilant about not crossing the streams since they're in professions that wouldn't take it very well if they found out their employees were writing and drawing queer erotica about Tolkien characters in their spare time.
1.1.2	1	I have other friends who live thousands of miles away, friends I may never be able to meet face to face, and whom I would never have met at all without the internet. I didn't know fandom was a thing at all until I started going online.
1.1.6	1	I don't know how I would have fallen into fandom without the internet, to be honest.
1.2.6 1.2.10	2	I'd been in fandom for years before I arranged to meet up with anyone in real life (and I always thought that was such a bizarre thing to call it, as if online friendships are somehow less real). When I finally did, it was a huge deal! Now I go to conventions a few times a year and the energy from having so many fans in one place is almost surreal.
1.1.5	2	Online, everyone can keep to their own schedules and still interact seamlessly via social media, blogs, etc.
1.2.6	2	the effort it takes to converge offline makes it very much a novelty, especially for conventions, since fans typically don't gather together on such a huge scale.
1.5.6	2	I also think fandom has become a less taboo subject to bring up irl than it was ten, or even five, years ago. There are fan brunches and meet-ups that happen on a regular basis, and people I barely know have mentioned fanfiction in passing like it's nothing. You can visit a comics shop and end up adding the cashier on twitter after you spend twenty minutes talking about Kamala Khan and it's not a big deal because you've both established yourselves as having common fannish interests. It's interesting to see how people are willing to discuss their fannishness with other people in non-fannish spaces, or how they create fannish spaces anyway once they realize there isn't one.
1.3.1 1.3.3.v 1.3.3.d 2.1.6.f 2.2.13 2.4.2	3	Honestly? Each other. Sharing headcanons, theories, ideas for alternate universes, responses to various aspects of whatever media fans are currently consuming...fandom is a huge information hub just by existing.
1.3.3.u 1.3.3.w 2.1.6.f	3	Fans aren't just swallowing media whole without examining it. We're constantly discussing it, debating it, criticizing it, and being inspired by it.
1.3.3.w 2.1.6.t	3	if our fannish source material of choice doesn't live up to our standards, we're happy to ignore certain parts of it to suit our preferences. In Teen Wolf fandom, it isn't unusual for very dedicated fans to say things like "oh, season 3A never happened" or "I stopped watching after season 3B." Their fannishness isn't called into question, not is their fannish output compromised.
1.3.3.i 3.4.3	4	Mental health is the first thing that comes to mind. I've opened up to fandom friends about things I was too shy or self-conscious to say to anyone else and every time I've been met with nothing but support. Most fans are very aware of what it's like to have a shameful secret, given that many people still consider fandom itself to be exactly that, and are very understanding of the superhuman effort it takes to admit to that, whether it's depression or body dysmorphia or sexual orientation. Fandom touts itself as a safe space for marginalized individuals and can be fiercely protective of its own, which wasn't something I expected when I first learned of its existence.

1.3.3.k 1.3.3.d 1.3.3.v 2.2.6	4	fans do a lot of things for each other in terms of sharing resources: vids, screen caps, books, comics, cosplay tips, cooking advice, etc.
1.3.2 1.3.3.b 1.3.3.e 3.4.3	4	A lot of us are on a pretty tight budget, so we help each other out by sharing what we have. Sometimes that involves pooling our money for bigger causes, like raising funds for a friend trying to afford top surgery, or who lost their job and needs rent money, or just throwing a few dollars at a kickstarter to make an anthology happen.
1.5.5	5	If fans want to be heard and taken seriously, we need to begin by killing the idea that being a fan is something to be ashamed of. There's a difference between foisting explicit fanart on an actor and wanting to have a conversation about queer representation in mainstream television. There's this misconception that fandom is all about creepy, screechy fangirls (which has a lot to do with fandom being derided as something girls do, but that's another issue) when the reality is that fandom is filled with immensely talented, intelligent people.
2.1.4 2.1.6.g 3.1.14	5	thanks to social media, I think it's becoming easier and easier for media producers to see this. The barriers of communication between fans and creators are getting thinner and thinner, while at the same time direct communication is happening more and more frequently.
2.1.6.k 3.1.1 3.1.8	5	some creators have been actively trying to engage with fans and the things they create. There have been fanart displays, fanfiction contests, polls about what kinds of story arcs fans are interested in, etc. Media producers are, if they're smart, aware that fans are part of how they get paid! We're the people buying the books, the DVDs, the con tickets. And if we feel dissatisfied, we can just as easily stop doing that.
3.1.10	5	I do think there is a line between fan's expressiveness and entitlement, though. If fans feel that showrunners owe it to them to provide something, that's an issue.

Participant #26

Code	Question	Statement
1.1.16 1.2.13	1	I think that nowadays fan activity (for TV, comics, movie, gaming fans etc. but to my knowledge not so much for other types of fans, e.g. sports fans) is mainly rooted online. While I know there are shops, conventions and other participatory activities/services off-line, I still think the majority of the fan community exists and functions online.
2.1.1 1.3.3.v 1.3.3.u 1.3.3.d 1.3.3.p 1.3.3.k 2.1.6.f 2.1.6.h 2.1.6.e	1	I think fans produce, discuss, share, learn, research, discover and essentially just connect with each other online.
1.1.3	1	for things like online gaming, the main or primary method of accessing the 'raw material' is online.
2.5.1	1	the most common types of activities would be production of literary works (fiction/poetry, reviews), and fan-art, but I've also seen fan made movie/shorts, trailers, animations, episodes, mash-ups, mods (with regard to games) etc.
2.5.5	1	the original work of the franchise was augmented, added to or in some other way used as primary inspiration and then extended. Most of the activities, especially those connected with TV/movies, seem to be mainly either recreations of existing episodes, or visions of what fans would like to see. I feel a main aspect that influences creation of this type of material is 'extra' or 'missing' scenes/episodes, i.e. things that fans feel should have happened but weren't shown.
2.1.6.p 2.2.1.c	1	I've also come across scientific papers (using current/valid scientific theories) hypothesising how technology from sci-fi shows could realistically be created or might function in the real world (mainly I've read

		Star Trek, Star Wars, and Stargate papers, and also one for Back to the Future).
1.1.8 1.1.1 1.3.3.g	1	creation of this type of material (especially shooting visual shorts/episodes) technically occurs offline, but most of the time it's only once it has been made available online that it gets shared, and in some cases it is made specifically for an online audience. I also think people create collaborative works more easily, frequently and readily online.
1.3.3.u 1.1.16	1	many people now access things like TV shows, movies, manga animations etc. online, sometimes exclusively online, whereas previously these 'raw' materials which spawned fans were accessed almost exclusively in the real world.
	1	Another thing I've seen more of lately is use of images from franchises as memes, and also use of rage comics, which I suppose were born online.
1.1.15 2.1.6.a	1	The enthusiasm is very apparent and it more often than not leads others in the comments sections who may not be familiar with the franchise, to become interested. In this way fans can generate 'word of mouth' advertising for a franchise and perpetuate its continued/growing popularity.
1.1.5	1	This is not so easily done in the real/offline world as it is harder to reach the same volume of people.
2.1.6.f	1	In terms of just connecting with other fans, fan forums, discussion/comment boards etc. are the main ways I know about of discussing and sharing your views.
2.1.6.q 2.1.1 2.1.5	1	I know that fans can get into really heated online discussions/arguments, but I've never really participated in that side of it. However it's much easier for fans to communicate with each other online, and this includes communication between fans whose views differ. I think it's much easier to stay in an argument online than it is offline, so there are lots of discussions that happen online that perhaps would not happen in the offline world.
2.5.3 3.5.1	1	the internet has made it easier to buy merchandise, both fan made and official.
2.2.1.b 2.2.5	1	Online is also the easiest and quickest way to find out what's happening and when, such as release dates, air dates, concert/convention/event dates etc.
1.2.13	2	I don't believe fan activity in the offline world is rooted as extensively as it is in the online world, but I think it's still considerable and has grown a lot because of the internet. By that I mean information can be spread so easily and quickly, that you can learn about a new series' or events etc. online despite only viewing or participating offline.
1.2.11	2	a lot of offline activity involves actually accessing the 'raw material', whether that would be buying/reading comics, books, watching movies/shows etc. so in that sense offline activity could be considered more important and prominent than online activity!
1.2.2 1.2.11	2	The main things that comes to mind when I think about offline activities other than that is cosplaying/larping and attendance at conventions, where people get a chance to meet their idols, dress up as characters, buy merchandise, and see/meet other fans in person. For me, I think shopping is a more of an offline activity rather than an online one, because I enjoy the environment and I enjoy physically handling items.
1.2.3	2	I can't think of any fan groups or clubs etc. near me that exist for people to physically meet up on a regular basis, but I'm sure that they exist.
1.2.4	2	Re-enactment activities (like of famous battles or at renaissance fairs) occur in the real world, and I feel things like that are also fan based activities.
1.2.1	2	I used to love reading Star Trek books, and that was very much an offline activity, from the purchasing to the reading.
2.5.3	2	I also think fans create materials for sale, such as jewellery, t-shirts, cards etc., in the real world, however I think the main method of exhibiting and selling them, other than at events/conventions, is online.
2.4.1 2.2.12 3.2.3 2.2.1.a	3	Other than the actual raw material itself (such as TV show episodes that act as the initial information source etc.), and their own imagination, I think fan-wikis have to an extent replaced fanzines, and most of these are accessed to check references and to get background information on characters, actors, or plots.

2.2.6	3	it's a useful source to check episode/story synopsis and recaps, to read character biographies etc. In terms of cosplay activities, I think online image archives and fan made art works are a really major source for costume designs. I think another major source is from online forums, where there are always users who are specialists in their particular fandom, so in that sense even though you are accessing the information online, you're really relying on people and using people as information sources.
2.4.3	3	I think a lot of the information accessed depends on what you're doing, which can be anything from research for your own fan work, or to get clarification on some aspect that you don't understand, or to identify a quote or particular episode.
2.2.12	3	fanwikis are really important, and possibly the most important because they are the most convenient way to find information quickly, especially when you need only the specific answers you're looking for.
1.3.3.s	4	Fan communities online make it easier to find people who share your interests, and therefore the people you meet in these environments stand a good chance of being potential friends, just based on the initial premise of mutual participation in the same fandom.
1.3.3.l	4	The information and resources that other fans create and provide however are really useful, especially for fans like me who do not make any/much actual contact with other fans, either on or off line.
1.3.3.s 1.3.3.i	4	I know that people develop friendships and then this extends to helping each other through difficult or turbulent times, as with any friendship.
2.2.6 2.2.8	4	In terms of researching facts, especially obscure details, fan created resources are really important.
1.3.2 1.1.7	4	Fellow fans are really important in boosting confidence and helping you find your way or making you feel validated and giving you a sense of belonging.
1.3.3.t 1.3.3.a	4	They function as sounding boards, someone you can bounce ideas off. They can provide advice, validation, quality control, beta testing, and above all none of this is possible without trust.
1.2.4 1.3.3.m	4	in the offline world, the moment you identify a fellow fan, you immediately on some level develop an allegiance with them, and this then influences your actions and interactions with them (e.g. like a sports fan recognising a fellow supporter, or a gaming fan seeing a fellow gamer in a Tee etc.). In this way, through visual or other identification, fans generate comradery for/towards/between/with each other.
3.5.5	5	I think there are still very clear boundaries between professionals and fans, and I suspect most of these boundaries are connected with the monetary side of things
1.5.5	5	I think in general fans are still looked down upon in some respects. It seems sometimes there's still some kind of stigma associated with being a fan or with being involved with fan activities.
3.5.4	5	I think to the professional (or some professionals) it might be just a job, another step in the career ladder, a paycheque etc., but to the fan it's more of a passion, something that's done without incentive of any kind of financial payoff or any other kind of gain (e.g. career progression or something). I suppose also recognition from the franchise itself may also change someone's status from being just a fan to being a professional.
3.1.2 3.1.8	5	fans of certain franchises seem to be more influential than others, and this mainly seems to be because the franchise chooses to embrace fan culture, rather than simply exploit it for commercial and financial gain. Supernatural for example actively acknowledges the existence of its fans, to the extent that existence of Supernatural fans and their activities have been incorporated into the series, into the plot, and have become an official part of the Supernatural canon.
3.1.8 3.2.4	5	Star Trek fans have also influenced a lot of aspects within the ST franchise, because the franchise seems to have always supported and almost encouraged its fans, e.g. by allowing characters to be used in fandom activities without starting legal actions about copyright infringements, actors endorsing fanzines from the very beginning, or by actively taking fan views into account.
3.1.4 3.1.5	5	For example in the ST Voyager franchise, fans wanted the characters of Paris and Torres to become a couple, and were speculating and writing

		about the Paris/Torres hook-up. I think this was initially 'officially' picked up by Christie Golden, who wrote official Star Trek novels, and then it was worked into the STV canon (Paris and Torres eventually got married and had a child in the show).
3.1.11 3.5.3	5	I think Christie Golden started out on fanfiction. She is now a professional writer who has written official/endorsed novels for quite a few franchises (Buffy/Angel, WoW, Assassins Creed, Star Wars/Clone Wars).
3.5.1 3.5.4	5	fans still make small amount so of money from creating materials that other fan will want to own. Most of the time this is artwork, items of clothing, or jewellery, and also collectables and items of etc. However I don't think that fans make very much money as most of these items are not mass produced, are usually one off items, and in many cases such as art works or stories, are freely shared.
3.5.2	5	I think some fans manage to break into the 'professional' market, but I don't think this happens very often.
3.1.1 3.1.12	5	I think franchises have become more fan-savvy in terms of making money from fans, and as a result there is a lot of 'official' merchandise (which is also very expensive), but which hasn't necessarily been made by fans of even people who might care about the franchise.

Participant #27

Code	Question	Statement
1.1.16	1	Fan activity is almost exclusively online anymore.
1.2.5	1	It tends to be the older groups that still meet "offline", although a few examples to the contrary exist. JemCon is for a series which aired 1985-88 however the online community can only be traced back to 1999 or so yet they (we) hose an annual event to get together in person.
1.1.8	1	Online fans do what fans do offline.
1.3.3.v 2.1.6.f 2.5.1 2.5.4	1	In the US "Lost" was a huge "phenomenon" and you had constructive adults sharing stories and "fan-theories" about it. This is what fans do online. Share ideas and derivative works about their "fandoms".
1.1.8 1.2.3	2	I feel that, offline, fans do much the same things or would if they could locate other fans more easily.
1.1.8 1.3.3.v 1.3.3.d 2.1.6.f 2.1.6.c	2	I feel that given the chance fan activity is much the same offline as it is online, barring the usual differences in communication. Fans seem interested in discussing and sharing the same ideas and works.
2.2.4 2.4.1	3	First and foremost fans reference the "source" that is the media they are a fan of. For 'Harry Potter' fans this would be the 'Harry Potter' book series. Whatever you're a fan of, that's what you go to first.
2.1.6.f 1.4.1 2.2.1.d 2.2.4 2.2.11	3	Secondly fans often reference any social media presence the creators may have-- and this is one of the ways fandom has changed more recently. The 'Gravity Falls' fans often comment on the implications of comments made on Alex Hirsch's twitter, speculating that a character's real name may be revealed or that a character may be killed off before the season is over.
1.4.1 3.1.8	3	'My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic' (circa 2011?) fans often used to reference the creator's deviant comments on fan materials. Some creators now actively engage in the community.
1.3.3.s	4	Fans provide companionship for other fans and an outlet for discussion and someone to share ideas with.
3.1.9	5	Christy Marx, narrative creator of 'Jem and the Holograms' makes a point to not look at fan works.
3.1.9	5	there was a Babylon 5 incident where some of the creators were on a BBS (or usenet?) with some fans and a "fanfic" (derivative narrative from a source not involved with work) was very similar to a script. Obviously the script had already been written edited and greenlit by the time the "fic" (short for "fanfic") was published but it had to be pulled due to concerns that it would appear the writers were copying the fans.
3.1.2	5	Depending on how involved with the community the creators are the fans seem to have more influence.

3.1.10	5	The newer 'My Little Pony' seems to have pulled a lot of ideas from the fans forming-- if you will pardon my language-- a clusterfuck. The fans were allowed far too much input, I feel and it was detrimental to product. Fan ideas, while interesting, seemed to be shoehorned into media. It appeared to turn into a game of "they like that give them more of it, even if it doesn't make sense". This was very popular for Hasbro but it lead to some backlash when the creators stopped doing that.
3.5.1 2.5.3 3.2.9	5	Traditionally fans wouldn't make much money, if any, off of work they didn't own. Now with the internet you can go on Etsy and find unlicensed merchandise not only from a questionable Chinese wholesaler but also from a girl knitting Batman dolls in her kitchen. This is new from the past few years, I think, that people list things like that openly and that people are making more money openly off of fanworks. Did people used to get a few bucks for fanart or fanfic commissions? Sure. But I think it's much more recent people will openly post that they are producing unlicensed merchandise.

Participant #28

Code	Question	Statement
1.1.16	1	I believe that fan activity is heavily rooted in the online world. It is the new base for fan/fan interaction.
1.2.5	1	In the past fans would communicate through fanzines, pen pals and the occasional face-to-face meetings - perhaps at conventions, screenings or at concerts, for example.
1.1.1 1.3.3.m 1.3.3.v	1	The internet has made fan interaction much easier socially (if we are to believe the stereotype of 'awkward geeks') and even internationally (as we all know that fan practices transcend the boundaries of race and culture), and has created more opportunities for fans to share what they produce as a result of their fandoms.
1.3.3.v	1	The online world is a hot bed for activity, for example, fans will showcase their ideas, opinions, art, writing, videos
1.1.14 1.3.3.m 1.4.6	1	primarily the online world is a way to communicate your sense of identity as a fan, and (if you want it) to gain the appreciation or 'celebrity' within a fangroup. Examples of these can be popular writers, artists, or youtube channels.
1.4.5	1	It is an altruistic as well as selfish enterprise.
1.1.2	2	I would think that in the real world, activity again centers around this idea of belonging to a group or fandom.
1.2.4 2.1.2 2.1.6.f 2.1.6.s 2.2.6	2	People hang around with others of the same interests, and you can even hear these fan conversations in places like video game retailers/ Gamesworkshop where staff, or customers will hotly debate the merits or downfalls of games. To outsiders this may seem trivial, but to the fan, with their knowledge, it is a way of asserting your fandom.
1.2.10 1.2.6 1.4.5	2	This is not to say that fandoms in the real world are bound by a knowledge-based hierarchy. Go to any convention, and you will see swarms of fans just having a good time; they socialise in a safe environment that accepts them for who they are; you will see fans at a concert having a drink before they go in. I feel that in the real world there are more social boundaries than there are online. I think fans choose their 'real world' social groups more carefully, and crave 'real world' interaction with people. The online world cannot provide this.
2.4.5 2.2.14 2.3.4 2.2.7 2.4.1 2.2.1.c	3	I use artbooks, promotional materials, and screen shots (digital). Soundtracks are also a great tool for inspiration. What I will say is that I prefer to have physical materials to work from, because to me going online an searching for images can be cumbersome a lot of the time (and the internet gets distracting).
1.4.1 2.2.4 2.2.1.d	3	I would say that any rare sources are probably highly valued by fans - rare information, something that you have personally modded or created.
1.4.6	3	If you are happy to just consume, then I would say that information or commodities that suit your tastes would be important. If you engage in production, then information that gives you an edge would be more important.

1.3.3.t 1.3.3.o	4	I would say that encouragement, either to do more, or get better would be the most helpful interactions between fans. This helps the producer to improve, engage with the fan community, and helps the consumer to feel a part of the process of production within their fanbase. It all roots back to a sense of community.
1.4.1 1.4.6	5	I believe that 'cultural capital' (higher levels of knowledge within a fandom) and the differences between producer and consumer fan types are the boundaries between amateur and professional fandom. There is to some extent a desire to be at the top of a fandom hierarchy, and due to the nature of fandom deeper understanding of it, or iteration with the creators, makes you stand out. This could be in the guise of a fanfic that everyone wants to read because it 'gets the characters', or writing or drawing things in response to what the fanbase sees as popular.
3.1.12	5	I guess in turn this would result in higher traffic to sites (and possible revenue in advertising space?).
3.5.1 3.2.6	5	The only real place I've seen professional fandom is in Japan and the doujinshi market (fan-made 'parody' comics of popular fandoms)
3.2.2 3.2.5	5	I would presume that nowadays it is around in the form or self published books, probably originally written as fan fiction that have had their protagonist's names changed to allow publication (I'm looking at you Fifty Shades of Grey).

Participant #29

Code	Question	Statement
1.1.16	1	I think there is a lot of fan activity on the online world, I would say most of the fan activity is online.
1.1.14	1	I guess it is safer for many people and easier, since you don't have to reveal your whole entire self to everyone.
1.3.3.l 2.5.4 2.5.1 2.5.3	1	• Create written faqs/walkthroughs for video games gamefaqs.com • Create guides to repair products like Apple or Android, e.g. ifixit.com • Create videos (on youtube as an example) for faqs/walkthroughs • Create parody videos • Create fan fiction • Create fan films • Release leaked trailers/footage for games/films/etc. • Engage in illegal activities e.g. uploading torrents, ebooks, rapidshare, etc. • Create/sell unauthorised merchandise • Stream themselves playing a game – e.g. twitch • Write on forums • Create wikis • Making gifs
1.2.2	2	I don't know if they do more in the offline world. I guess it is hard to say since I do not know many hardcore fans.
1.3.3.q 1.3.3.c 1.3.3.m 1.3.3.u	2	• Wear costumes i.e. cosplay • Some do Live action role-playing (larping) • Go to musical concerts to listen to music from their favourite film/show/game. • Buy merchandise – official or unofficial • Go to fan conventions • Get autographs of celebrities • Meet other like minded fans • Go on tours of the sets of films/tv series • Visit the places where of tv/film production e.g. New Zealand for LOTR
2.4.2	3	• Wikis • Books • Twitter • Facebook

		• Youtube celebrities • Books • Fan fiction • Autobiographies • Websites (Gamespot, IGN, Gametrailers)
2.2.12 2.3.1	3	For many people, including myself, I think that wikis are the most important source of information. They are dynamic, meaning they are always constantly updated in there is new information. Fans are very observant noticing any incorrect details.
1.3.3.d 1.3.3.l 2.5.4 2.3.1	4	Fans provide information to each other in forums, videos on youtube or in wikis.
1.3.3.b	4	Sometimes fans even provide money to each other from using patreon.com or using websites like kickstarter.
1.3.3.v	4	Fans also share costumes with each other. Fans create mods for each others to use in video games.
1.3.3.c	4	Fans try to help each other to get to conventions and other fan meet ups.
3.1.14	5	I would say that the boundaries of the fan and the professional is blurred, especially nowadays. With social media, most professionals have accounts which means they can interact with their fans.
1.3.3.b 2.5.3 3.5.1	5	Many fans, have youtube channels where they can gain advertising revenue, or they fundraise on kickstarter, patreon or on twitch (people pay with PayPal). Some even sell their own merchandise or try to get jobs at the companies they love like Microsoft/Apple.
2.1.6.i 3.1.5	5	Fans lobby companies not to cancel television programmes by public protests, twitter or forums. They can also influence storylines with what they can write in forums – an example of this is Glee.
3.1.1	5	if there is enough interest in a franchise a company may re-release/remake a film/game/tv series. But this doesn't always work though – a case in point is Final Fantasy 7. It is a game people would love a HD remake for but it still hasn't been made – even though people clamber for it.

Participant #30

Code	Question	Statement
2.1.6.n	1	Fans communicate via online means. Before this was the case, it was very possible to be a passionate fan of something, and to be the only person you knew who had this passion. Now, one instantly knows for sure that there is a group of people who are fans and that you can be in touch with them.
2.1.6.f 2.1.6.c 2.1.6.q	1	Fans discuss, argue and share fan fiction/artwork with other fans.
3.3.1 2.2.9 3.3.1	2	Meet-ups such as conventions, conferences, and library groups allow fans to do these activities in person.
2.4.2	3	Online websites, social media, blogs. Books, magazines, TV.
2.2.5	3	Online sources have overtaken print in terms of speed of delivery of the "latest news", but for more in-depth and thoughtful commentary, print wins out.
1.3.3.d	4	Questions on trivia can be answered.
1.3.3.g 1.3.1 2.5.2	4	It can also be a good venue for contacting new people with an eye to collaboration.
2.1.6.g 2.1.6.p 2.2.1.c 3.1.14	5	It is definitely easier to contact professionals with a quick fan letter type of message, and many will respond with a quick thank you. It has also become easier to contact creators with requests to conduct interviews.
3.5.5	5	As for making money, nothing comes to mind.
3.1.10	5	I do not think it is my position as a fan of a franchise to tell the people responsible for it what they should do. I am at the other end of the

		process in that I consume the product and decide if I like it or not. I don't want to dictate to filmmakers what should happen next in a movie series, for instance.

Participant #31

Code	Question	Statement
1.1.16	1	Fan activity, I think, stems in the online world.
1.1.1 1.1.11	1	You can become a fan of anything, through any other form of media, but the internet allows you to grow your interest in the subject and interact with like-minded people.
2.5.1 2.5.4	1	This includes writing fanfiction, drawing fanart, basic forum discussions, online roleplay, blogging (and vlogging)...
1.2.13	2	The real world presents a limited opportunity for fandoms, in my opinion. Aside from conventions and exhibitions, occasional television shows also allow for fan activity.
2.2.5	3	Magazines, online blogging websites such as Tumblr and Twitter. The former provides a chunk of information in one medium, whereas the latter is easily accessible and updated at almost a real-time basis. Twitter in particular is a more viable online source, as it contains news and sometimes information from the sources themselves.
1.3.2 1.3.3.f	4	It's a community that sticks out for each other. They support each other and ensure that fans enjoy their time within the fandom.
3.1.16	5	The fans have a huge influence, in my opinion.
3.1.5 3.1.4	5	Especially within television shows, such as Supernatural and Star Trek, where the fans have a major say in certain aspects of the storyline. In a sense, the professionals are indebted to the fans and have to ensure that their work satisfies their most 'loyal customers'.

Appendix H – Delphi thematic units – by frequency

Thematic units – by frequency

Question 1

Code	Frequency	Statement
1.1.16	16	Most fan activity takes place online.
1.3.3.v	15	Activities include: Creating and sharing fanworks
1.1.1	14	The internet enables increased a) reach; b) diversity; c) visibility and; d) discussion.
2.1.6.f	12	Communication takes place for the following reasons: Discuss and interpret ideas and fanworks
1.1.2	10	Significant and meaningful relationships can be formed online, sometimes progressing offline.
1.3.1	10	Fans engage in both small-scale and large-scale participatory activities.
1.3.3.d	9	Activities include: Sharing information, news, links, recs, trivia, etc.
1.1.11	8	Online fandom can be divided into three functions: a) social; b) creative; c) interpretive.
2.5.1	8	Produsage is a large part of fandom, manifested in the creation of fanworks and other fan-related resources.
2.5.4	8	Produsage also takes form in non-creative works such as beta-reading, reviewing, commenting, uploading photos and blogs, writing guides and walkthroughs etc.
1.1.4	6	Online activity depends on physical location and proximity to other fans.
1.1.10	6	Web 2.0 has enabled more dynamic interactions between fans and their fandoms.
1.1.14	6	Fans can better tailor their fan experience and identity online than offline, benefitting from greater anonymity or exposure.
1.1.3	5	The amount of online activity depends on the fandom, and in which 'realm' it is centred.
1.1.6	5	The online is an entry point into a fandom.
1.3.3.s	5	Activities include: Forming friendships
1.3.3.w	5	Activities include: Contesting and rejecting official source material
2.1.6.c	5	Communication takes place for the following reasons: Sharing fanworks
1.1.8	4	Fans do the same things online as they do offline.
1.3.3.a	4	Activities include: Feedback and criticism on fanworks.
1.3.3.l	4	Activities include: Crowdsourcing fan projects such as wikis, rec lists, etc.
1.3.3.m	4	Activities include: Networking, connecting, socialising
1.3.3.o	4	Activities include: Creating and evolving fan groups or communities
2.1.1	4	Due to the speed and easiness of communication, the internet has become the premier medium for fan communication.

1.1.5	3	The online allows for a narrowing of physical and temporal space.
1.1.7	3	There is greater acceptance and normalisation of fan identity online.
1.1.9	3	The online world is an information hub which fan communities grow up around.
1.2.2	3	Fans still engage in many offline activities. It's just harder to spot.
1.2.3	3	Offline activity depends on physical location and proximity to other fans.
1.2.13	3	Offline fan activity is not as extensive as online fan activity.
1.3.3.r	3	Activities include: 'Flame wars' and other types of conflict
1.3.3.u	3	Activities include: Consumption and discussion of official works and fanworks
2.1.6.e	3	Communication takes place for the following reasons: Find new friends or make enemies
2.2.5	3	Online resources are favoured for speed; print and analogue resources for accuracy.
2.5.2	3	Collaboration and crowdsourcing is a large part of produsage activities.
1.1.13	2	The online better serves the long tail of fandom.
1.1.15	2	The web is used to recruit new fans.
1.2.5	2	There are generational differences - older fans do more offline than younger fans.
1.3.3.f	2	Activities include: Giving practical support to other fans, e.g. travel advice, visa applications
1.3.3.j	2	Activities include: Both official and non-official petitions, polls social media campaigns and other events
1.3.3.q	2	Activities include: Roleplaying (both on- and offline)
1.3.3.t	2	Activities include: Encouraging and praising fanworks
2.1.6.a	2	Communication takes place for the following reasons: Spreading the word to and recruiting potential new fans.
2.1.6.q	2	Communication takes place for the following reasons: To debate, argue, fight
2.2.1.a	2	Fans seek fandom-related information for the following reasons: To aggregate information resources to share
2.2.1.b	2	Fans seek fandom-related information for the following reasons: To research and better understand their fandom
2.2.7	2	Fans can tailor information behaviour depending on their needs.
2.3.1	2	Fans aggregate information for other fans in the form of creating rec lists, link lists, wikis, tutorials, guides, etc.
2.4.2	2	A wide range of resources are used, whether based online, offline, or specific to neither.
2.5.3	2	Fans will sell, exchange, or gift their work.
1.1.12	1	The online is better suited to sharing and finding; the offline to creating.
1.2.6	1	Offline fan activity is more ephemeral, intense, and intimate, but it requires more money, time and effort.
1.2.10	1	Friendships born online are cultivated offline.
1.3.3.g	1	Activities include: Collaboration on fan projects.

1.3.3.i	1	Activities include: Moral and mental health support for other fans
1.3.3.k	1	Activities include: Research for fan-related projects and resource-sharing
1.3.3.p	1	Activities include: Mentoring and teaching other fans
1.4.4	1	Certain fans act as information sources or gatekeepers for the wider fan community.
1.4.5	1	Not all of fandom is based on hierarchies.
1.4.6	1	Fandom is hierarchical and those who display more knowledge of their fandom gain more status in the fan community.
1.5.1	1	There are hierarchies within fandom, some individuals being in conflict with one another.
1.5.2	1	Factions exist within fandoms, some in conflict with one another.
2.1.5	1	The speed of online communication facilitates rumours and disputes.
2.1.6.b	1	Communication takes place for the following reasons: 'Sharing the love'
2.1.6.d	1	Communication takes place for the following reasons: Find information and/or official and fan-made products
2.1.6.h	1	Communication takes place for the following reasons: To research for the creation of fanworks
2.1.6.j	1	Communication takes place for the following reasons: To communicate information
2.1.6.l	1	Communication takes place for the following reasons: To form communities or groups
2.1.6.n	1	Communication takes place for the following reasons: To communicate globally in real time
2.1.6.p	1	Communication takes place for the following reasons: To research fandom(s) (for academic or personal purposes)
2.2.1.c	1	Fans seek fandom-related information for the following reasons: To do research for a particular fan-related project
2.2.1.f	1	Fans seek fandom-related information for the following reasons: To collect fanworks.
2.2.2	1	Depending on the fandom, fan activity and related information behaviour may be concentrated on certain platforms.
2.2.3	1	Some fans are lurkers and their information behaviour is invisible.
2.2.12	1	Wikis are of growing importance.
2.2.13	1	Fandom is an information hub and a knowledge space.
2.5.5	1	Produsage can be a way of building on the source text, and/or filling in the gaps in the source text.
3.1.5	1	Fans can keep a franchise alive, start a fan franchise or change a franchise through petitioning, campaigning, creating 'noise', publicity, leaks, lowering ratings and crowdfunding projects.
3.2.3	1	Fans can create and contribute to amateur information resources.
3.3.2	1	Fans can create their own information resources.
3.5.1	1	Some fans act in a semi-professional capacity.
3.5.4	1	Fans are not interested in money, and engage in these activities primarily out of love.

Question 2

Code	Frequency	Statement
1.2.2	19	Fans still engage in many offline activities. It's just harder to spot.
1.2.1	10	Offline fans primarily engage in consumerism – buying and collecting merchandise.
1.2.10	9	Friendships born online are cultivated offline.
1.2.3	8	Offline activity depends on physical location and proximity to other fans.
1.2.4	8	Fans engage in semantic and enunciative production offline.
1.2.13	7	Offline fan activity is not as extensive as online fan activity.
1.2.6	6	Offline fan activity is more ephemeral, intense, and intimate, but it requires more money, time and effort.
1.2.11	6	Many franchises are born offline, so consumption of these franchises will take place offline.
1.1.8	4	Fans do the same things online as they do offline.
1.1.2	3	Significant and meaningful relationships can be formed online, sometimes progressing offline.
1.1.5	3	The online allows for a narrowing of physical and temporal space.
1.3.3.c	3	Activities include: Creating, organising and (if offline) going to contests, challenges, workshops, cosplay shoots, cons, panels, seminars, meetings and other events.
2.1.6.f	3	Communication takes place for the following reasons: Discuss and interpret ideas and fanworks
2.2.1.f	3	Fans seek fandom-related information for the following reasons: To collect fanworks.
3.3.1	3	Libraries and archives have a place in fandom.
1.1.1	2	The internet enables increased a) reach; b) diversity; c) visibility and; d) discussion.
1.1.3	2	The amount of online activity depends on the fandom, and in which 'realm' it is centred.
1.3.3.a	2	Activities include: Activities include: Feedback and criticism on fanworks.
1.3.3.g	2	Activities include: Collaboration on fan projects.
1.3.3.m	2	Activities include: Networking, connecting, socialising
1.3.3.s	2	Activities include: Forming friendships
1.3.3.u	2	Activities include: Consumption and discussion of official works and fanworks
2.1.2	2	Offline communication is still important.
2.5.1	2	Produsage is a large part of fandom, manifested in the creation of fanworks and other fan-related resources.
2.5.3	2	Fans will sell, exchange, or gift their work.
1.1.6	1	The online is an entry point into a fandom.
1.1.10	1	Web 2.0 has enabled more dynamic interactions between fans and their fandoms.
1.2.5	1	There are generational differences - older fans do more offline than younger fans.
1.2.7	1	Fans can recruit offline friends into a fandom.

1.2.9	1	The offline requires a loss of anonymity fans are not comfortable with.
1.2.12	1	The offline is safer because fans don't have to put their work or fan identity on public display.
1.2.14	1	The offline allows first-hand experience of different cultural fan practices.
1.3.3.d	1	Activities include: Sharing information, news, links, recs, trivia, etc.
1.3.3.e	1	Activities include: Donating and collecting for charity and other charitable endeavours.
1.3.3.o	1	Activities include: Creating and evolving fan groups or communities
1.3.3.q	1	Activities include: Roleplaying (both on- and offline)
1.3.3.t	1	Activities include: Encouraging and praising fanworks
1.3.3.v	1	Activities include: Creating and sharing fanworks
1.4.5	1	Not all of fandom is based on hierarchies.
1.5.6	1	Stigma of fans and fandom is improving.
2.1.6.c	1	Communication takes place for the following reasons: Sharing fanworks
2.1.6.s	1	Communication takes place for the following reasons: To show off
2.2.6	1	Other fans are an important discovery tool and source of information.
2.2.9	1	Libraries and reading groups can be places to seek information.
2.4.1	1	The prime resource is the source text.
2.4.4	1	Online resources are favoured.
2.5.2	1	Collaboration and crowdsourcing is a large part of produsage activities.
2.5.4	1	Produsage also takes form in non-creative works such as beta-reading, reviewing, commenting, uploading photos and blogs, writing guides and walkthroughs etc.
3.3.4	1	Some fans will mentor and teach novice fans new skills.
3.3.6	1	Fan conventions often hold workshops and academic panels.
3.4.1	1	Crowdfunding is an important activity, for charitable or fan-related projects.
3.5.1	1	Some fans act in a semi-professional capacity.

Question 3

Code	Frequency	Statement
2.4.2	19	A wide range of resources are used, whether based online, offline, or specific to neither.
2.4.1	13	The prime resource is the source text.
2.2.4	12	Official accounts and sources are given precedence over unofficial ones, and rare information is prized.
2.2.6	10	Other fans are an important discovery tool and source of information.
2.2.1.b	8	Fans seek fandom-related information for the following reasons: To research and better understand their fandom

2.2.7	7	Fans can tailor information behaviour depending on their needs.
2.2.2	6	Depending on the fandom, fan activity and related information behaviour may be concentrated on certain platforms.
2.2.5	6	Online resources are favoured for speed; print and analogue resources for accuracy.
2.2.10	6	Particular fans will act as information gatekeepers to the wider fan community.
2.2.12	6	Wikis are of growing importance.
2.2.8	5	Secondary resources are also important.
2.2.11	5	Rumours, misinformation and disinformation are widespread problems on the internet.
2.3.1	5	Fans aggregate information for other fans in the form of creating rec lists, link lists, wikis, tutorials, guides, etc.
1.5.3	4	Social media is rife with rumour, misinformation and disinformation; fans are far more ready to believe, misinterpret and spread these online than offline.
2.2.1.a	4	Fans seek fandom-related information for the following reasons: To aggregate information resources to share
1.4.1	3	Fans are collectors of information and news about their fandom and the creators of their fandom.
1.4.6	3	Fandom is hierarchical and those who display more knowledge of their fandom gain more status in the fan community.
2.1.6.d	3	Communication takes place for the following reasons: Find information and/or official and fan-made products
2.1.6.f	3	Communication takes place for the following reasons: Discuss and interpret ideas and fanworks
2.2.1.c	3	Fans seek fandom-related information for the following reasons: To do research for a particular fan-related project
2.4.3	3	Resources used depend on a) the fan's own preference; b) the fandom itself (e.g. accessibility and availability of sources), and; c) what the information is being used for.
1.1.5	2	The online allows for a narrowing of physical and temporal space.
1.2.2	2	Fans still engage in many offline activities. It's just harder to spot.
1.2.13	2	Offline fan activity is not as extensive as online fan activity.
1.3.3.d	2	Activities include: Sharing information, news, links, recs, trivia, etc.
1.3.3.w	2	Activities include: Contesting and rejecting official source material
1.4.3	2	In anime and manga fandoms, fan translators are particularly important as information gatekeepers and providers.
1.4.4	2	Certain fans act as information sources or gatekeepers for the wider fan community.
2.1.1	2	Due to the speed and easiness of communication, the internet has become the premier medium for fan communication.
2.1.3	2	There is evidence of a communication chain.
2.2.1.d	2	Fans seek fandom-related information for the following reasons: To gain 'rare' or valuable information for purposes of knowledge and/or social capital.
2.2.14	2	Print can be a more effective resource – especially for art. Image search online can be cumbersome.

2.3.3	2	Folksonomic classifications are useful in finding and disseminating information.
2.5.5	2	Produsage can be a way of building on the source text, and/or filling in the gaps in the source text.
3.2.8	2	Fanworks fill in gaps and provide something that regular mainstream publishing doesn't or can't.
3.3.1	2	Libraries and archives have a place in fandom.
1.1.2	1	Significant and meaningful relationships can be formed online, sometimes progressing offline.
1.1.4	1	Online activity depends on physical location and proximity to other fans.
1.1.14	1	Fans can better tailor their fan experience and identity online than offline, benefitting from greater anonymity or exposure.
1.2.3	1	Offline activity depends on physical location and proximity to other fans.
1.3.1	1	Fans engage in both small-scale and large-scale participatory activities.
1.3.3.g	1	Activities include: Collaboration on fan projects.
1.3.3.k	1	Activities include: Research for fan-related projects and resource-sharing
1.3.3.o	1	Activities include: Creating and evolving fan groups or communities
1.3.3.u	1	Activities include: Consumption and discussion of official works and fanworks
1.3.3.v	1	Activities include: Creating and sharing fanworks
2.1.5	1	The speed of online communication facilitates rumours and disputes.
2.1.6.j	1	Communication takes place for the following reasons: To communicate information
2.1.6.m	1	Communication takes place for the following reasons: To create and/or collaborate on projects
2.1.6.n	1	Communication takes place for the following reasons: To communicate globally in real time
2.1.6.o	1	Communication takes place for the following reasons: To spread rumours
2.1.6.p	1	Communication takes place for the following reasons: To research fandom(s) (for academic or personal purposes)
2.1.6.r	1	Communication takes place for the following reasons: To teach and/or mentor one another
2.1.6.t	1	Communication takes place for the following reasons: To reject elements of a fandom
2.2.1.e	1	Fans seek fandom-related information for the following reasons: To scout out or discover something they might be interested in.
2.2.13	1	Fandom is an information hub and a knowledge space.
2.3.2	1	Fans can work on fandom-related resources in a professional or semi-professional capacity.
2.3.4	1	Finding images online can be difficult.
2.4.5	1	Offline resources are favoured.
2.5.2	1	Collaboration and crowdsourcing is a large part of produsage activities.
2.5.3	1	Fans will sell, exchange, or gift their work.

3.1.8	1	Some creators will actively engage with fans and encourage fan activities.
3.2.2	1	Fans can work semi-professionally on professional materials, using skills not learned in a professional or academic capacity.
3.2.3	1	Fans can create and contribute to amateur information resources.
3.2.9	1	Copyright is still a significant barrier to disseminating fanworks.
3.3.4	1	Some fans will mentor and teach novice fans new skills.
3.3.5	1	Fans can be motivated by their fandom to take professional classes to learn new skills.
3.3.6	1	Fan conventions often hold workshops and academic panels.
3.3.7	1	New technologies have changed how we create, edit and distribute media.
3.5.1	1	Some fans act in a semi-professional capacity.

Question 4

Code	Frequency	Statement
1.3.2	16	Fans support each other in non-fandom-related aspects of their everyday lives.
1.3.3.a	13	Activities include: Feedback and criticism on fanworks.
1.3.3.i	13	Activities include: Moral and mental health support for other fans
1.3.3.d	12	Activities include: Sharing information, news, links, recs, trivia, etc.
1.3.3.f	11	Activities include: Giving practical support to other fans, e.g. travel advice, visa applications
1.3.1	10	Fans engage in both small-scale and large-scale participatory activities.
1.3.3.t	9	Activities include: Encouraging and praising fanworks
1.3.3.v	9	Activities include: Creating and sharing fanworks
1.3.3.e	8	Activities include: Donating and collecting for charity and other charitable endeavours.
2.2.6	7	Other fans are an important discovery tool and source of information.
3.2.1	7	Fans have evolved their own editing and publishing practices.
1.3.3.l	5	Activities include: Crowdsourcing fan projects such as wikis, rec lists, etc.
1.3.3.s	5	Activities include: Forming friendships
1.1.7	4	There is greater acceptance and normalisation of fan identity online.
1.3.3.c	4	Activities include: Creating, organising and (if offline) going to contests, challenges, workshops, cosplay shoots, cons, panels, seminars, meetings and other events.
1.3.3.j	4	Activities include: Both official and non-official petitions, polls social media campaigns and other events
1.3.3.m	4	Activities include: Networking, connecting, socialising
1.3.3.b	3	Activities include: Crowdfunding fanworks and official works.
1.3.3.k	3	Activities include: Research for fan-related projects and resource-sharing

1.3.3.w	3	Activities include: Contesting and rejecting official source material
2.1.6.j	3	Communication takes place for the following reasons: To communicate information
3.4.3	3	Fans support one another through both mental and physical problems.
1.2.4	2	Fans engage in semantic and enunciative production offline.
1.3.3.n	2	Activities include: Academic studies – questionnaires, surveys etc.
1.3.3.p	2	Activities include: Mentoring and teaching other fans
1.3.3.r	2	Activities include: 'Flame wars' and other types of conflict
1.5.1	2	There are hierarchies within fandom, some individuals being in conflict with one another.
1.5.2	2	Factions exist within fandoms, some in conflict with one another.
2.1.6.f	2	Communication takes place for the following reasons: Discuss and interpret ideas and fanworks
2.2.1.a	2	Fans seek fandom-related information for the following reasons: To aggregate information resources to share
2.2.1.c	2	Fans seek fandom-related information for the following reasons: To do research for a particular fan-related project
2.3.1	2	Fans aggregate information for other fans in the form of creating rec lists, link lists, wikis, tutorials, guides, etc.
2.5.2	2	Collaboration and crowdsourcing is a large part of produsage activities.
2.5.4	2	Produsage also takes form in non-creative works such as beta-reading, reviewing, commenting, uploading photos and blogs, writing guides and walkthroughs etc.
3.2.7	2	Fans can create materials on commission, but generally fandom works on a gift economy and fans prefer not to exchange money for their work.
3.4.1	2	Crowdfunding is an important activity, for charitable or fan-related projects.
3.4.2	2	Fans can raise awareness of issues through social media campaigns and other forms of activism.
3.5.4	2	Fans are not interested in money, and engage in these activities primarily out of love.
1.1.14	1	Fans can better tailor their fan experience and identity online than offline, benefitting from greater anonymity or exposure.
1.2.1	1	Offline fans primarily engage in consumerism – buying and collecting merchandise.
1.2.8	1	Offline postal networks exist to ship over merchandise and physical fanworks.
1.3.3.g	1	Activities include: Collaboration on fan projects.
1.3.3.h	1	Activities include: Grassroots activism, petitioning, raising awareness, etc.
1.3.3.o	1	Activities include: Creating and evolving fan groups or communities
1.3.3.u	1	Activities include: Consumption and discussion of official works and fanworks
1.5.5	1	Stigma of fans and fandom is still a problem.

2.1.6.c	1	Communication takes place for the following reasons: Sharing fanworks
2.1.6.h	1	Communication takes place for the following reasons: To research for the creation of fanworks
2.2.1.b	1	Fans seek fandom-related information for the following reasons: To research and better understand their fandom
2.2.8	1	Secondary resources are also important.
2.2.13	1	Fandom is an information hub and a knowledge space.
2.3.2	1	Fans can work on fandom-related resources in a professional or semi-professional capacity.
2.3.3	1	Folksonomic classifications are useful in finding and disseminating information.
3.1.1	1	Fans influence on producers is limited mainly to their purchasing power.
3.1.3	1	Fans are one of the main sources of generating hype and buzz for a franchise.
3.1.6	1	Social media can act as an indexing tool for fan interest in a franchise.
3.2.8	1	Fanworks fill in gaps and provide something that regular mainstream publishing doesn't or can't.

Question 5

Code	Frequency	Statement
3.1.5	16	Fans can keep a franchise alive, start a fan franchise or change a franchise through petitioning, campaigning, creating 'noise', publicity, leaks, lowering ratings and crowdfunding projects.
3.1.1	15	Fans influence on producers is limited mainly to their purchasing power.
3.1.2	12	Fan influence depends on the fandom - some franchises are more receptive to fans than others.
3.5.1	12	Some fans act in a semi-professional capacity.
3.1.12	10	Fan activity can be 'monetized'.
3.1.14	9	The internet makes it easier for fans to interact with producers and vice versa.
3.1.10	8	Fans should not have too much influence on producers as it can be detrimental to the franchise.
3.5.4	8	Fans are not interested in money, and engage in these activities primarily out of love.
2.5.3	7	Fans will sell, exchange, or gift their work.
3.1.4	6	Franchise producers acknowledge fans by incorporating Easter eggs and fan service into their products.
3.1.8	6	Some creators will actively engage with fans and encourage fan activities.
3.5.5	6	Fans don't make much money.
3.1.11	5	Rarely, producers will employ fans.
3.5.2	5	Fans can gain their own following, springboarding to a professional career.
1.4.2	4	Fans can gain their own following, and get job offers due to their work.

1.5.4	4	Fans can be actively ignored and/or rejected by producers or creators.
2.1.4	4	Producers and creators monitor fan communication more often nowadays.
2.1.6.g	4	Communication takes place for the following reasons: To contact franchise producers/creators
3.2.4	4	Depending on the fandom, the rights-owner will be more lenient towards fan practices and fanworks than others.
3.2.9	4	Copyright is still a significant barrier to disseminating fanworks.
3.1.3	3	Fans are one of the main sources of generating hype and buzz for a franchise.
3.1.6	3	Social media can act as an indexing tool for fan interest in a franchise.
3.1.9	3	Producers and creators can't engage too much with fans and fanworks due to a fear of being accused of plagiarism.
3.2.5	3	Some fans may repurpose their fanworks to publish their work in a mainstream capacity.
1.3.3.b	2	Activities include: Crowdfunding fanworks and official works.
1.5.5	2	Stigma of fans and fandom is still a problem.
2.1.6.a	2	Communication takes place for the following reasons: Spreading the word to and recruiting potential new fans.
2.1.6.i	2	Communication takes place for the following reasons: For advocating, petitioning, canvassing and taking part in grassroots activities
3.1.13	2	Producers can exploit fan activity.
3.1.16	2	Fans have a big influence on producers.
3.2.2	2	Fans can work semi-professionally on professional materials, using skills not learned in a professional or academic capacity.
3.2.6	2	Attitudes to copyright differ depending on cultural background.
3.2.7	2	Fans can create materials on commission, but generally fandom works on a gift economy and fans prefer not to exchange money for their work.
3.4.1	2	Crowdfunding is an important activity, for charitable or fan-related projects.
1.1.15	1	The web is used to recruit new fans.
1.3.1	1	Fans engage in both small-scale and large-scale participatory activities.
1.3.3.d	1	Activities include: Sharing information, news, links, recs, trivia, etc.
1.3.3.j	1	Activities include: Both official and non-official petitions, polls social media campaigns and other events
1.3.3.m	1	Activities include: Networking, connecting, socialising
1.4.1	1	Fans are collectors of information and news about their fandom and the creators of their fandom.
1.4.6	1	Fandom is hierarchical and those who display more knowledge of their fandom gain more status in the fan community.
1.5.1	1	There are hierarchies within fandom, some individuals being in conflict with one another.
1.5.2	1	Factions exist within fandoms, some in conflict with one another.

2.1.6.c	1	Communication takes place for the following reasons: Sharing fanworks
2.1.6.f	1	Communication takes place for the following reasons: Discuss and interpret ideas and fanworks
2.1.6.j	1	Communication takes place for the following reasons: To communicate information
2.1.6.k	1	Communication takes place for the following reasons: To take part in contests, polls, showcases (sometimes official), etc.
2.1.6.p	1	Communication takes place for the following reasons: To research fandom(s) (for academic or personal purposes)
2.1.6.q	1	Communication takes place for the following reasons: To debate, argue, fight
2.2.1.b	1	Fans seek fandom-related information for the following reasons: To research and better understand their fandom
2.2.1.c	1	Fans seek fandom-related information for the following reasons: To do research for a particular fan-related project
2.2.6	1	Other fans are an important discovery tool and source of information.
3.1.7	1	Some producers will recruit fans as 'intermediaries' between them and their fanbase.
3.1.15	1	Younger fans expect to influence their fandoms more than older ones.
3.2.8	1	Fanworks fill in gaps and provide something that regular mainstream publishing doesn't or can't.
3.5.3	1	Some 'profic' writers started out as fanfic writers.

Appendix I – Delphi thamtic units – by question

Thematic units – by question

Theme 1: Fan Communities

1.1. Online community

Code	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	
1.1.1	14	2				
1.1.2	10	3	1			
1.1.3	5	2				
1.1.4	6		1			
1.1.5	3	3	2			
1.1.6	5	1				
1.1.7	3			4		
1.1.8	4	4				
1.1.9	3					
1.1.10	6	1				
1.1.11	8					
1.1.12	1					
1.1.13	2					
1.1.14	6		1	1		
1.1.15	2				1	
1.1.16	16					
	94	**16**	**5**	**5**	**1**	**121**

1.2. Offline community

Code	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	
1.2.1		10		1		
1.2.2	3	19	2			
1.2.3	3	8	1			
1.2.4		8		2		
1.2.5	2	1				
1.2.6	1	6				
1.2.7		1				
1.2.8				1		
1.2.9		1				
1.2.10	1	9				
1.2.11		6				
1.2.12		1				
1.2.13	3	7	2			
1.2.14		1				
	13	**78**	**5**	**4**		**100**

1.3. Participatory culture

Code		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	
1.3.1		10		1	10	1	
1.3.2					16		
1.3.3							
	a	4	2		13		
	b				3	2	
	c		3		4		
	d	9	1	2	12	1	
	e		1		8		
	f	2			11		
	g	1	2	1	1		
	h				1		
	i	1			13		
	j	2			4	1	
	k	1		1	3		
	l	4			5		
	m	4	2		4	1	
	n				2		
	o	4	1	1	1		
	p	1			2		
	q	2	1				
	r	3			2		
	s	5	2		5		
	t	2	1		9		
	u	3	2	1	1		
	v	15	1	1	9		
	w	5		2	3		
		78	**19**	**10**	**142**	**6**	**255**

1.4. Social & knowledge capital

Code	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	
1.4.1			3		1	
1.4.2					4	
1.4.3			2			
1.4.4	1		2			
1.4.5	1	1				
1.4.6	1		3		1	
	3	**1**	**10**		**6**	**20**

1.5. Conflict

Code	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5
1.5.1	1			2	1
1.5.2	1			2	1
1.5.3			4		
1.5.4					4
1.5.5				1	2
1.5.6		1			

Theme 2: Fan Information Behaviour

2.1. Communication

Code		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	
2.1.1		4		2			
2.1.2			2				
2.1.3				2			
2.1.4						4	
2.1.5		1		1			
2.1.6							
	a	2				2	
	b	1					
	c	5	1		1	1	
	d	1		3			
	e	3					
	f	12	3	3	2	1	
	g					4	
	h	1			1		
	i					2	
	j	1		1	3	1	
	k					1	
	l	1					
	m			1			
	n	1		1			
	o			1			
	p	1		1		1	
	q	2				1	
	r			1			
	s		1				
	t			1			
		36	**7**	**18**	**7**	**18**	**86**

2.2. Information seeking

Code		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	
2.2.1							
	a	2		4	2		
	b	2		8	1	1	
	c	1		3	2	1	
	d			2			
	e			1			
	f	1	3				
2.2.2		1		6			
2.2.3		1					
2.2.4				12			
2.2.5		3		6			
2.2.6			1	10	7	1	
2.2.7		2		7			
2.2.8				5	1		
2.2.9			1				
2.2.10				6			
2.2.11				5			
2.2.12		1		6			
2.2.13		1		1	1		
2.2.14				2			
		15	**5**	**84**	**14**	**3**	**121**

2.3. Information organisation

Code	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	
2.3.1	2		5	2		
2.3.2			1	1		
2.3.3			2	1		
2.3.4			1			
	2		**9**	**4**		**15**

2.4. Resources

Code	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	
2.4.1		1	13			
2.4.2	2		19			
2.4.3			3			
2.4.4		1				
2.4.5			1			
	2	**2**	**36**			**40**

2.5. Produsage & user-generated content

Code	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	
2.5.1	8	2				
2.5.2	3	1	1	2		
2.5.3	2	2	1		7	
2.5.4	8	1		2		
2.5.5	1		2			
	22	**6**	**4**	**4**	**7**	**43**

Theme 3: Social effect

3.1. Media industry

Code	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	
3.1.1				1	15	
3.1.2					12	
3.1.3				1	3	
3.1.4					6	
3.1.5	1				16	
3.1.6				1	3	
3.1.7					1	
3.1.8			1		6	
3.1.9					3	
3.1.10					8	
3.1.11					5	
3.1.12					10	
3.1.13					2	
3.1.14					9	
3.1.15					1	
3.1.16					2	
	1		**1**	**3**	**102**	**107**

3.2. Publishing & copyright

Code	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	
3.2.1				7		
3.2.2			1		2	
3.2.3	1		1			
3.2.4					4	
3.2.5					3	
3.2.6					2	
3.2.7				2	2	
3.2.8			2	1	1	
3.2.9			1		4	
	1		**5**	**10**	**18**	**34**

3.3. Education & information provision

Code	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	
3.3.1		3	2			
3.3.2	1					
3.3.3	-NIL – merged with 2.2.12-					
3.3.4		1	1			
3.3.5			1			
3.3.6		1	1			
3.3.7			1			
	1	**5**	**6**			**12**

3.4. Charities, advocacy, activism and support

Code	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	
3.4.1		1		2	2	
3.4.2				2		
3.4.3				3		
3.4.4	-NIL – merged with 1.3.2-					
		1		**7**	**2**	**10**

3.5. Pro-ams or professional amateurs

Code	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	
3.5.1	1	1	1		12	
3.5.2					5	
3.5.3					1	
3.5.4	1			2	8	
3.5.5					6	
	2	**1**	**1**	**2**	**32**	**38**

TOTALS

Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	
272	142	198	207	203	**1022**

Appendix J – Delphi questionnaire – Round 2

Delphi Questionnaire – Round Two

Age:
Gender:
Are you an acafan (academic fan?):

Instructions

The following statements have been summarized from all 31 responses from Round One. Please read each statement carefully and mark your level of agreement with each one. If you have any comments to make, please use the comment boxes provided. You are invited to write as much or as little as you wish. Please return by **Monday 22nd June 2015.**

THEME 1: FAN COMMUNITIES

1.1. Online Community	Scale				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. The internet enables increased a) reach; b) diversity; c) visibility and; d) discussion.					
2. Significant and meaningful relationships can be formed online.					
3. The amount of online activity depends on the fandom, and in which 'realm' it is centred.					
4. Online activity depends on physical location and proximity to other fans.					
5. The online allows for a narrowing of physical and temporal space.					
6. The online is an entry point into a fandom.					
7. There is greater acceptance and normalisation of fan identity online.					
8. Fans do the same things online as they do offline.					
9. Web 2.0 has enabled more dynamic interactions between fans and their fandoms.					
10. Online fandom can be divided into three functions: a) social; b) creative; c) interpretive.					
11. The online is better suited to sharing and finding; the offline to creating.					
12. The online better serves lesser known fandoms.					

13. Fans can better tailor their fan experience and identity online than offline, benefitting from greater anonymity or exposure.					
14. The web is used to recruit new fans.					
15. Most fan activity takes place online.					

1.2. Offline Community	Scale				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Offline fans primarily engage in consumerism – buying and collecting merchandise.					
2. Fans still engage in many offline activities. It's just harder to spot.					
3. Offline activity depends on physical location and proximity to other fans.					
4. Offline fans show their fandom by what they say and wear.					
5. There are generational differences - older fans do more offline than younger fans.					
6. Offline fan activity is more ephemeral, intense, and intimate.					
7. Fans can recruit offline friends into a fandom.					
8. Offline postal networks exist to ship over merchandise and physical fanworks.					
9. Many franchises are born offline, so consumption of these franchises will take place offline.					
10. The offline is safer because fans don't have to put their work or fan identity on public display.					
11. The offline allows first-hand experience of different cultural fan practices (e.g. food, dress etc.)					

Comments (Optional):

1.3. Participatory Culture	Scale				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Fans engage in both small-scale and large-scale participatory activities.					
2. Fans support each other in non-fandom-related aspects of their everyday lives.					

1.4. Social & knowledge capital	Scale				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Fans are collectors of information and news about their fandom.					
2. Fans can gain their own following, and get job offers due to their work.					
3. Certain fans act as information sources or gatekeepers for the wider fan community.					
4. Fandom is hierarchical.					

1.5. Conflict	Scale				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Factions exist within fandoms, some in conflict with one another.					
2. Social media is rife with rumour, misinformation and disinformation; fans are far more ready to believe, misinterpret and spread these online than offline.					
3. Fans can be actively ignored and/or rejected by producers or creators.					
4. Stigma of fans and fandom is still a problem.					

Comments (Optional):

THEME 2: FAN INFORMATION BEHAVIOUR

2.1. Communication	Scale				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Due to the speed and easiness of communication, the internet has become the premier medium for fan communication.					
2. Offline communication is still important.					
3. Communication passes from producers to fans and from fans to other fans.					
4. Producers and creators monitor fan communication more often nowadays.					

2.2. Information Seeking	Scale				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Some fans are lurkers and their information behaviour is invisible.					
2. Official accounts and sources are given precedence over unofficial ones, and rare information is prized.					
3. Online resources are favoured for speed; print and analogue resources for accuracy.					
4. Other fans are an important discovery tool and source of information.					
5. Fans can change information behaviour depending on their needs.					
6. Secondary resources are also important.					
7. Libraries and reading groups can be places to seek information.					
8. Wikis are of growing importance.					
9. Fandom is an information hub and a knowledge space.					
10. Print can be a more effective resource – especially for art. Image search online can be cumbersome.					

Comments (Optional):

2.3. Information Organisation	Scale				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Fans aggregate information for other fans in the form of creating rec lists, link lists, wikis, tutorials, guides, etc.					
2. Fan-made tags are useful in finding and disseminating information.					

2.4. Resources	Scale				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. The source of a fandom is the most important resource.					
2. A wide range of resources are used, whether based online, offline, or specific to neither.					
3. Resources used depend on a) the fan's own preference; b) the fandom itself (e.g. accessibility and availability of sources), and; c) what the information is being used for.					
4. Online resources are favoured.					

Comments (Optional):

2.5. Produsage & user-generated content	Scale				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Produsage (user-generated content) is a large part of fandom, manifested in the creation of fanworks and other fan-related resources.					
2. Collaboration and crowdsourcing is a large part of produsage activities.					
3. Produsage also takes form in non-creative works such as beta-reading, reviewing, commenting, uploading photos and blogs, writing guides and walkthroughs etc.					
4. Produsage can be a way of building on the source text, and/or filling in the gaps in the source text.					

THEME 3: SOCIAL EFFECT

3.1. Media Industry	Scale				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Fans' influence on producers is limited mainly to their purchasing power.					
2. Fan influence depends on the fandom - some franchises are more receptive to fans than others.					
3. Franchise producers acknowledge fans by incorporating Easter eggs and fan service into their products.					
4. Fans can keep a franchise alive, start a fan franchise or change a franchise through petitioning, campaigning, creating 'noise', publicity, leaks, lowering ratings and crowdfunding projects.					
5. Some producers will recruit fans as 'intermediaries' between them and their fanbase.					
6. Some creators will actively engage with fans and encourage fan activities.					

7. Producers and creators can't engage too much with fans and fanworks due to a fear of being accused of plagiarism.					
8. Fans should not have too much influence on producers as it can be detrimental to the franchise.					
9. Rarely, producers will employ fans.					
10. Producers can exploit fan activity.					
11. The internet makes it easier for fans to interact with producers and vice versa.					
12. Younger fans expect to influence their fandoms more than older ones.					
13. Fans have a big influence on producers.					

3.2. Publishing & Copyright	Scale				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Fans have evolved their own editing and publishing practices (e.g. beta-reading).					
2. Fans can create and contribute to amateur information resources (e.g. wikis).					
3. Some fans may repurpose their fanworks to publish their work in a mainstream capacity.					
4. Fans can create materials on commission, but generally fandom works on a gift economy and fans prefer not to exchange money for their work.					
5. Some creators will actively engage with fans and encourage fan activities.					
6. Copyright is still a significant barrier to disseminating fanworks.					

3.3. Education & Information Provision	Scale				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Some fans will mentor and teach novice fans new skills.					

2. Fans can be motivated by their fandom to take professional classes to learn new skills.					
3. Fan conventions often hold workshops and academic panels.					
4. New technologies have changed how we create, edit and distribute media.					

Comments (Optional):

3.4. Charities, advocacy, activitism & support	Scale				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Crowdfunding is an important activity, for charitable or fan-related projects.					
2. Fans can raise awareness of issues through social media campaigns and other forms of activism.					
3. Fans support one another through both mental and physical problems.					

3.5. Pro-ams & professional amateurs	Scale				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Some fans act in a semi-professional capacity.					
2. Fans are not interested in money, and engage in these activities primarily out of love.					
3. Fans don't make much money.					

Comments (Optional):

Appendix K – Delphi round 2 email sent to participants

Dear All,

First of all a great big thank you to all those who participated in the first round. The response was much higher than expected and provided some really rich, interesting data. All this data had to be coded, which took longer than I anticipated – hence the delay in getting back to you with Round 2.

However, the second round can now begin, and I have attached the second questionnaire to this email, which is different to the first one you received. **This questionnaire has 3 basic questions for demographic purposes, and also has 88 statements generated from your responses - you will need to rate your agreement with each one.** This will help to ascertain the level of consensus amongst the panel. Depending on the level of consensus in this round, a final, third round will be initiated.

Where possible, the statements are taken directly from the responses, and your opinions on them would be much appreciated. **If you feel your opinion has not been represented in the statements – or if you want to make any comment at all – please feel free to use the comment boxes provided throughout the survey.**

You have 5 weeks to complete the questionnaire at your leisure. Therefore, I would be grateful if you could return the survey by **Monday 22nd June 2015.** You can respond either by using the Word .docx attachment, or the Adobe PDF attachment, which you can fill using Adobe Reader (the PDF is preferred, as it is more user-friendly). Also included is a summary of key findings from Round 1, which you are welcome to read and comment on if you wish.

As before, all responses are anonymous. Please note that reminders will be sent out in the final week before the deadline.

Again, many thanks for your participation, and for sharing your thoughts and experiences – it is so much appreciated. And please do contact me if you need help with anything at all.

All best,

-Ludi

Instructions

1) The statements are divided into themed sections to make it easier to get through. Please read each statement, and choose one of the 5 buttons to mark your level of agreement. **If you're unsure about your answer, please click 'Neither agree nor disagree'.**

2) If you feel that your opinion has not been represented, or if you wish to make any comment at all, please use the comment box provided at the end of each section. You can write as much as you wish (the box will extend to fit in your comment).

3) **DO** take your time. There's no need to finish it all at once (unless you want to!).

4) If you have any questions or don't understand anything, please don't hesitate to email me.

5) When you've finished, please email the completed form back to me by **Monday 22nd June 2015**.

Appendix L – Delphi round 2 – majority statements that reached consensus

DELPHI STUDY ROUND 2 RESULTS – MAJORITY STATEMENTS & STATEMENTS THAT REACHED A CONSENSUS

Statements marked '-' are not majority statements (i.e. they did not reach over 50% agreement or disagreement).
Statements with percentages marked in red were at or higher than the APMO cut-off rate of 67%, and thus indicate a consensus was reached.

THEME 1: FAN COMMUNITIES

1.1. Online Community	
1. The internet enables increased a) reach; b) diversity; c) visibility and; d) discussion.	30/30 100% agree
2. Significant and meaningful relationships can be formed online.	29/30 96% agree
3. The amount of online activity depends on the fandom, and whether it's based online or offline.	22/30 73% agree
4. Online activity depends on physical location and proximity to other fans.	22/29 76% disagree
5. The online allows for a narrowing of physical and temporal space.	18/30 60% agree
6. The online is an entry point into a fandom.	21/30 70% agree
7. There is greater acceptance and normalisation of fan identity online.	26/30 87% agree
8. Fans do the same things online as they do offline.	-
9. Web 2.0 has enabled more dynamic interactions between fans and their fandoms.	23/30 77% agree
10. Online fandom can be divided into three functions: a) social; b) creative; c) interpretive.	22/30 73% agree
11. The online is better suited to sharing and finding; the offline to creating.	-
12. The online better serves lesser known fandoms.	23/30 77% agree
13. Fans can better tailor their fan experience and identity online than offline, benefitting from greater anonymity or exposure.	28/30 93% agree
14. The web is used to recruit new fans.	23/30 77% agree
15. Most fan activity takes place online.	-
	287

1.2. Offline Community	
1. Offline fans primarily engage in consumerism – buying and collecting merchandise.	-
2. Fans still engage in many offline activities. It's just harder to spot.	27/30 90% agree
3. Offline activity depends on physical location and proximity to other fans.	24/30 80% agree
4. Offline fans show their fandom by what they say and wear.	23/30 77% agree
5. There are generational differences - older fans do more offline than younger fans.	17/30 67% neither agree or disgaree
6. Offline fan activity is more ephemeral, intense, and intimate.	-
7. Fans can recruit offline friends into a fandom.	25/30 84% agree
8. Offline, fans use the post to ship over merchandise and physical fanworks.	23/30 76% agree
9. Many franchises are born offline, so consumption of these franchises will take place offline.	-
10. The offline is safer because fans don't have to put their work or fan identity on public display.	-
11. The offline allows first-hand experience of different cultural fan practices (e.g. food, dress etc.)	16/30 53% agree
	155

1.3. Participatory Culture	
1. Fans collaborate in large-scale projects as well as small-scale ones.	28/30 94% agree
2. Fans support each other in non-fandom-related aspects of their everyday lives.	26/30 87% agree
	54

1.4. Social & knowledge capital	
1. Fans are collectors of information and news about their fandom.	30/30 100% agree
2. Fans can gain their own following, and get job offers due to their work.	23/30 77% agree
3. Certain fans act as information sources or gatekeepers for the wider fan community.	28/30 94% agree
4. Fandom is hierarchical.	-
	81

1.5. Conflict	
1. Factions exist within fandoms, some in conflict with one another.	27/30 90% agree
2. Social media is rife with rumour, misinformation and disinformation; fans are far more ready to believe, misinterpret and spread these online than offline.	19/30 63% agree
3. Fans can be actively ignored and/or rejected by producers or creators.	25/30 84% agree
4. Stigma of fans and fandom is still a problem.	24/30 87% agree
	95

THEME 2: FAN INFORMATION BEHAVIOUR

2.1. Communication	
1. Due to the speed and easiness of communication, the internet has become the premier medium for fan communication.	29/30 96% agree
2. Offline communication is still important.	23/30 76% agree
3. Communication passes from producers to fans and from fans to other fans.	23/30 77% agree
4. Producers and creators monitor fan communication more often nowadays.	21/30 70% agree
	96

2.2. Information Seeking	
1. Some fans are lurkers and their information behaviour is invisible.	25/30 84% agree
2. Official accounts and sources are given precedence over unofficial ones, and rare information is prized.	25/30 84% agree
3. Online resources are preferred for speed; print and analogue resources for accuracy.	-
4. Other fans are an important discovery tool and source of information.	28/30 94% agree
5. Fans can change the way they look for information depending on their needs.	27/30 90% agree
6. Secondary resources are also important.	26/30 86% agree
7. Libraries and reading groups can be places to seek information.	16/30 54% agree
8. Wikis are of growing importance.	23/30 77% agree
9. Fandom is an information hub and a knowledge space.	28/30 93% agree
10. Print can be a more effective resource – especially for art. Image search online can be cumbersome.	-
	198

2.3. Information Organisation	
1. Fans collect information for other fans in the form of creating rec lists, link lists, wikis, tutorials, guides, etc.	29/30 96% agree
2. Fan-made tags are useful in finding and sharing information.	26/30 87% agree
	55

2.4. Resources	
1. The source of a fandom is the most important resource.	19/30 63% agree
2. Fans use a wide range of resources, whether based online, offline, or specific to neither.	28/30 93% agree
3. Resources used depend on a) the fan's own preference; b) the fandom itself (e.g. accessibility and availability of sources), and; c) what the information is being used for.	27/30 90% agree
4. Online resources are preferred.	19/30 64% agree
	93

2.5. Produsage & user-generated content	
1. Produsage (user-generated content) is a large part of fandom, manifested in the creation of fanworks and other fan-related resources.	27/30 90% agree
2. Collaboration and crowdsourcing is a large part of produsage activities.	23/30 77% agree
3. Produsage also takes form in non-creative works such as beta-reading, reviewing, commenting, uploading photos and blogs, writing guides and walkthroughs etc.	26/29 90% agree
4. Produsage can be a way of building on the source text, and/or filling in the gaps in the source text.	26/30 87% agree
	102

THEME 3: SOCIAL EFFECT

3.1. Media Industry

1.	Fans' influence on producers is limited mainly to their purchasing power.	-
2.	Fan influence depends on the fandom - some franchises are more receptive to fans than others.	28/30 93% agree
3.	Franchise producers acknowledge fans by incorporating Easter eggs and fan service into their products.	28/30 94% agree
4.	Fans can influence a franchise through petitioning, campaigning, creating 'noise', publicity, leaks, lowering ratings and crowdfunding projects.	23/30 76% agree
5.	Some producers will recruit fans as 'intermediaries' between them and their fanbase.	-
6.	Some creators will actively engage with fans and encourage fan activities.	27/30 90% agree
7.	Producers and creators can't engage too much with fans and fanworks due to a fear of being accused of plagiarism.	-
8.	Fans should not have too much influence on producers as it can be detrimental to the franchise.	(29) -
9.	Rarely, producers will employ fans.	17/30 67% neither agree or disgaree
10.	Producers can exploit fan activity.	25/30 83% agree
11.	The internet makes it easier for fans to interact with producers and vice versa.	27/30 90% agree
12.	Younger fans expect to influence their fandoms more than older ones.	18/30 60% agree
13.	Fans have a big influence on producers.	17/30 67% neither agree or disgaree
		210

3.2. Publishing & Copyright

1.	Fans have evolved their own editing and publishing practices (e.g. beta-reading).	28/30 93% agree
2.	Fans can create and contribute to amateur information resources (e.g. wikis).	30/30 100% agree
3.	Some fans may repurpose their fanworks to publish their work in a mainstream capacity.	27/30 90% agree
4.	Generally fandom works on a gift economy and fans prefer not to exchange money for their work.	18/30 60% agree
5.	Copyright is still a significant barrier to disseminating fanworks.	16/30 53% agree
		119

3.3. Education & Information Provision	
1. Some fans will mentor and teach novice fans new skills.	27/30 90% agree
2. Fans can be motivated by their fandom to take professional classes to learn new skills.	26/30 86% agree
3. Fan conventions often hold workshops and academic panels.	25/30 84% agree
4. New technologies have changed how we create, edit and distribute media.	30/30 100% agree
	108

3.4. Charities, advocacy, activitism & support	
1. Crowdfunding is an important activity, for charitable or fan-related projects.	25/30 83% agree
2. Fans can raise awareness of issues through social media campaigns and other forms of activism.	26/30 94% agree
3. Fans support one another through mental, practical and physical problems.	30/30 100% agree
	81

3.5. Pro-ams & professional amateurs	
1. Some fans act in a semi-professional capacity.	24/30 80% agree
2. Fans are not interested in money, and engage in these activities primarily out of love.	-
3. Fans don't make much money.	-
	24

Total statements = 88
Total participants = 30
Total opinions unexpressed = 3
Total opinions expressed = 2637
Majority agreements (agreements that reached over 50% support) = 1685
Majority disagreements (disagreements that reached over 50% support) = 22
Majority neutral (neutral statements that reached over 50% support) = 51
Total majority opinions = 1758

Average percent of majority opinions (APMO) = $\frac{1758}{2637}$ x 100 = 67% (66.66%)

Appendix M – Delphi round 2 participant comments

Round 2 – Participant comments

Participant 3

1.1.6. I don't think of the online communities as being an entry point. I think mainstream media is where most fandoms begin and when mainstream media fails to deliver enough content or the kind of content a fan wants then really hard-core fans go and find the content they want.

1.1.8 I don't really think fans do the same thing online as they do offline but since I have never really been in an offline fan community I can't really answer.

1.1.9 Web 2.0?

1.1.10 There are also "encyclopedic" fandoms. I read some reddit post a bout this a while ago. Encyclopedic fandoms enjoy mastery of the industry canon. They don't do "transformational" work like write fanfiction. They tend to be predominantly male and somewhat derisive of derivative creative works based on their fandom.

1.5.4 I am blown away by how much mainstream media is derivative and yet people still scrunch up their noses when they hear the word fanfiction.

Participant 4

1.5.4 Working with high schoolers, I can see a significant normalization of the fan garb and identity in these kids compared to what I used to experience as a teenager. Stigma of fan might still exist but nerd do is the new sexy and it definitely shows.

3.1.8. I'm not sure if fans influencing their creators is either a bad or a good thing per se, I think it really dependes on the creators and the fanbase. For example, more often than not comic book fans criticize the problematic aspects of their fandoms in a way that positively challenges the creators, while in other franchises fans are known to have bullied and attacked creators and actors with a degree of violence that is totally inappropriate when discussing entertainment.

Participant 5

1.5.1. Romy versus Rogneto. 'Nuff said.

Participant 9

1.5.4. i'd say that stigma of female fans is a rather huge problem. It should be noted that a lot of times, it is female fans who get turned into a punchline and how 'haha look at this fan and their whacky stories'. Male fans rarely get the same degree of scrunity or mockery that female fans have to face.

2.5.4. re: producage of fan material, i feel that... a lot of times, we're trying to go BEYOND filling in gaps in canon. we strive to make fan material that surpasses canon and corrects any mistakes that might have occurred which includes ignoring or reverting character deaths. and also for examining sexualities and gender roles.

Participant 11

3.2.3. For examples on labor and fans working in the industry, the game industry is more suitable perhaps than some other industries.

3.5. For the pro ams section, I really think it depends what you are looking at. And also, what time in someone´s life. Some people might make fan art or costumes etc, and at some point also align this with their professional activities, or keep doing both. I´m not sure about fan fiction, where I often feel that the filing off the serial numbers discussions take place, but I´ve see a lot of cosplayers, visual artist and webcomic artists maintain both fan works and original designs. At some point they become pro and keep doing both.

Participant 14

1.1 and 1.2. Personally, I find the distinction between on/offline to be not particularly productive; or, at least, without a clear sense of what is meant by 'fandom' - some are more active online than off, and vice versa (for example, sports fandom vs. media fandom), so that these things need - in my opinion - to be clarified in order for some of these questions to be answered adequately/accurately. Further, at least in my own fannish experience, people don't neatly separate into on/offline fandoms, but engage in a range of activities that span both. For example, with #4 in 1.2 ("offline fans show their fandom by what they say and wear") - I'm not clear what's meant by "offline fans" - fans who only engage in fannish activity offline, or all fans when they're not online? I primarily engage in fandom online, but that doesn't preclude my wearing fannish clothing/accessories, talking about my fandom offline, etc.

For 1.4, #4 - fandom can be heirarchical, and deeply so; it doesn't therefore follow that (all) fandom is hierarchical.

I don't understand what 2.4 #1 means, to be honest.

2.5. I have to confess, I intensely dislike the term "produsage."

Participant 15

1.2.4. I don't think that being an offline fan always translates to demonstrating that fandom by what you do and wear, I think it's possible to participate without either of those things being a major factor. Also while age is a factor in on and offline fandom I think it also depends on the type of fandom and the activities associated with it.

1.5.4. I think fandom is hierarchical but that you also choose whether to participate in that hierarchy, nobody has to 'bow down' to so-called 'big name fans' you can still participate in your own way without engaging in the fandom hierarchy and many myself included choose to operate in that way. Also depending on fandom experience you may not even know who is in these hierarchical positions because of the way you participate I know in the past I've considered myself an engaged fan of something (sorry I personally loathe and don't use 'in fandom') but been oblivious to who is 'in charge

3.2.5. I know of one fan friend who refuses flat out to engage with any fan produced work as they feel it is an infringement of copywright and shouldn't be done at all even for personal use. This is the only person in or outside fans I've found to have such a strong opinion on it though!

Participant 16

On 1.5 3) It /is/ rife with all of those, and we are very ready to believe, misinterpret and spread them online, but I don't think more so than offline. I also think social media provides a lot of clarification or at least opportunity for clarification and cutting down on such information that isn't available offline.

3.5 3) Not sure: If the question means overall and not just from fan activities (eg, commissions for fanart), then disagree. If it means just from fan activities, then agree.

Participant 17

1.1 and 1.2. It's hard to answer some of these. Because, yes, online serves lesser-known fandoms. But that's not to say it doesn't serve better-known fandoms. Online often is how the better-known fandoms grew to be known.

I don't know that you can divide fandoms between online and offline. In my experience, a fan is a fan, online or off. I may express it differently offline, but I'm still just as much a fan, and fan experiences are just as intense. Online can be intimate, when you connect with people on a personal level even though they live on a different continent. Offline may not be intimate -- a con with a few thousand people is not necessarily intimate, even though you're able to meet people in person.

I think online is safer, because while you can put fan work online, you don't have to do so, and you can do so using an assumed identity. While I have one friend, a former co-worker, who also is in fandom and knows how heavily involved I am in it, I am not able to be as open about my fandom activities in my offline life. The T-shirts I wear speak to others in the fandom, like a secret handshake. If you get it, you get it and you'll say so. If you don't, no harm done. I don't wear T-shirts that plaster a particular character's or actor's face across my chest, because, well, for starters, my husband and kids wouldn't appreciate it. Non-fandom friends, I think, would think I'd lost my mind.

Online is an outlet. I have found like-minded people with whom I can share my joy in this thing. That's not something I have offline.

1.5.2. I don't know that fans are more ready to believe, misinterpret and spread rumors online so much as the Internet makes it easier. I don't discuss my fandom (much) with people offline. Because they aren't interested. But I have an entire network of people online who are interested. It's not so much about being "ready" as it is just easier. It spreads faster online, because the tools are in place to help it.

1.5.4. I am not as open about my fandom activities offline as I'd like to be, because I think there is a stigma. People who don't get it don't get it. I had enough of my siblings teasing my over a celebrity crush when I was 10. I'm not going to put myself in that position -- even if it's not really a celebrity crush -- now that I'm a grown woman.

2.2.10 Of course print can be an important resource. I do still trust it more than some (not all) online sources. And online image searches do have their challenges. (How do you describe "I want the picture of this person in that outfit in that setting for that thing two years ago, I think"? Short of just typing the person's name into Google Images and searching through hundreds of photos, I don't know.)

2.4. In a fandom, a resource is a resource. As long as it's a good one, fandoms don't care if they're online or off. Online makes it easier to share, but fans will find a way around it being offline, if need be.

If you mean "fandom is the most important resource" in that first question, then, yes, I agree. I turn to my fandom as my primary resource because it combines so many other resources under one roof.

3.5, No. 3 ... If you mean fans don't make much money off being fans, then you're mostly right. Some fans manage to translate their fan activities into a viable career. Most don't. If you mean fans generally don't have high-paying jobs, wrong. Granted, many don't. But many of us are old enough and educated enough to have decent-paying jobs. (How else do you explain the ability to afford cross-country flights for conventions and other fan gatherings, as well as all the merchandise?)

Participant 18

1.2. I don't know as much about *offline* fandom, but I think a lot of it depends on the fans and the fandom. I also think there's a fuzzy line between online and offline fandom - fans might be a part of both. I have some friends who are active in online fandoms, but who also go to cons and cosplay and meet up in person, which they arrange online, and then post photos and talk about later online. So I think fandom can be a mix. Online and offline activities are better for some things and not others.

1.4.4. I think that fandom can sometimes be hierarchical, but at other times allows for a broader response to works that isn't as rigidly disseminated or created. I think it may depend not only on the fandom and the creators and the fans, but also on the types of social media used to connect. E.g., livejournal and tumblr are set up in different ways to faciliatate different types of interactions, which changes or influences how people connect to one another or how the fandom develops.

2.2.1 Some lurker behavior is visible - doesn't A03 record hits even if someone isn't a member? I know you can leave kudos as a lurker.

3.2.4. I think fandom currently mostly works as a gift economy, but others might find a way to turn it into a business or make some money. For example, cosplay is huge, and some fans make some money by making costumes or props for the cosplay market or by selling art at cons, etc. Also I have seen a lot of people recently (say past 6 months or so) start Patreon accounts. That seems like it's in a fairly early stage, so we'll see how that develops and if it changes how $ and fandom work.

3.5.3. Do you mean that fans don't make money off of fanworks? Because I presume at least some fans make money in their jobs. Largely I agree that fans don't make much money off of their fanworks, and mostly engage in fandom out of love or other factors besides money. E.g., some fans write fanfic not solely out of love for a work, but out of anger or a desire to critique because they don't like something about the canon. So they fill in the blanks, or provide emotional resolution where there was none, or create more diverse characters, or give stronger roles to women, etc. I think fans are concerned with money - people want to get paid for their labor - and I've seen many who wish they could turn their efforts into a job or way to supplement their income.

Participant 20

2.3.2. I have mixed feelings about tags being successful for organising fan information because althogh it can be used to find information there is little consistency in the use of tags and a fan made have to search a variety of them before they are able to find the information they want.

Participant 22

1.4.4. In my opinion, fandom is not hierarchical. Yes, there are more talented fans, but they are not most important than you or me. Each fan have its importance. Even if I wrote a thesis about fans, I'm not more important than them. Our fandom is more important than me.

Also, I have the impression that the French speaking media does not take fandom seriously (vs English speaking media)

3.1. About media industry : one thing I like about the My Little Pony : Friendship is Magic (MLP:FIM) fandom is the proximity between creators of the show and the fans. The 100th episode, who will be release on June 13, will be filled with beloved background characters.

About an another fandom, I wish we (the fans) could help to get our third movie, but it depends on the authors, the actors and their schedule (because they have other projects). And I don't know if our country film subsidies plays a major role in our fandom.

Participant 23

3.1.1: Purchasing power is very strong but sometimes fans can affect the way art is produced (ie a favorite character may be appear more due to warm acceptance by fans)

3.1.13: Depends on franchise.

3.5.2: Not always, some aim to become professionally involved with something relevant.

3.5.3: Usually not, but what is a fan has ie google ads and makes money via number of visits?

Participant 25

1.2.11. I want to clarify my answer in that I do believe offline fan spaces allow for this, but online spaces do as well.

Participant 26

Section 2.2, Ques. 10: Print can be more effective, but very limited, in both content and availability. Therefore online searching, as difficult as it may be, is still often the only way to go, because it is imediately available (e.g. my local library won't have a hardcopy catalogue of 'fandom' related imagery).

Participant 28

I would like to clarify my 'Neither agree nor disagree' selections.

1.2.1. Offline fans primarily engage in consumerism buying and collecting merchandise.

I don't believe this to be the case. Of course consumerism is a large part of offline fandom, but a lot of the activities and objects that are *shared* online are created offline. There is also the case of fan-to-face meetings, conventions, table top gaming sessions, debates etc.

A lot of what happens online also takes place offline; as point 3 suggests, proximity and locality have a large part to play in these interactions, making the online an easier place to express fandom, but not to the exclusion of them happening offline.

1.2.9. Many franchises are born offline, so consumption of these franchises will take place offline.

Again, I think that the boundaries off the offline and online are blurred.

For example, I recently became interested in a TV series as it had been advertised on TV (offline), the first episode of which was available for free on Youtube (online).

Once hooked I decided to buy the Blu-ray to enjoy at home (offline), but bought the said object online. This led to some research online in terms of art/production/character profiles/soundtrack - and eventually the purchase of a book covering these from an online vendor, to enjoy at home in the offline.

I even outwardly identified as a fan by 'liking' the Facebook page, a rarity for me.

Fandoms are intrinsically rooted in the online and offline - in indulging/consumption in fandom (the physical objects as well as information) you will come in contact with both spheres.

2.2.3. Online resources are preferred for speed; print and analogue resources for accuracy.

I agree with this, but even though online resources are speedy to retrieve (if catalogued well, not in the case of many Wiki image galleries), I myself am still reluctant to search for them because I sometimes find the act of looking cumbersome.

If I have it to hand, I always choose print over online resources.

2.4. 4. Online resources are preferred.

Though I do not personally agree with this, I believe that the general fan communities do prefer online resources.

3.1.1. Fans influence on producers is limited mainly to their purchasing power.

There appears to be more responsiveness to fan's influence on producers.

As a gamer I have noticed this a lot in the gaming world. Whereas once a game is shipped it is hard to change the content, some developers have sighted fan-response as a reason for changing game features in a sequel, or going that extra mile and tirelessly working in patches for corrections, or content.

Some examples of game producers responses to fans can be seen in;

- Mass Effect 3; to which entire ending sequences where added to better explain plot holes or add weight to 'player choice'.

Whereas I believe the ending had been rushed due to release schedules and time restraints, it is remarkable that Bioware responded to the fanbase's calls for more by adding a, Extended Cut as a hefty 10GB patch.

- More recently Ubisoft released a video discussing their mistakes in relation to how it will improve their next games. I have selected some quotes below to illustrate that fan feedback is a big part of this process.

Ubisoft on Assassin's Creed Unity's Mistakes

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UgYf42d0zMg

"The worst thing that can happen actually, when you release a game, is to have your bug becoming the front cover of the entire internet." (Assassin's Creed Unity face glitch).

"(It's disappointing for the developer but) I feel for the fans who felt somehow that it didn't meet their expectations. That's disappointing as well."

"But listening to comments, reading the forums, reading the reviews, we always base our next steps on that."

"...you build on the things you did well, and the things that people enjoyed and that they wanted more of."

"The core of our work is to listen to the player."

3.1.4. Fans can influence a franchise through petitioning, campaigning, creating ‘noise’, publicity, leaks, lowering ratings and crowdfunding projects.

They can, but ultimately the power to get these things done is with the producers and companies behind the franchises.

Again to sight a gaming example; Konami recently announced the cancellation of the game Silent Hills, which was to be the next installment of the cult gaming IP Silent Hill.

Adding to the cult status of Silent Hill in it's own right, the big names working on this project, Hideo Kojima, Guillearmo del Toro, and Norman Redus have significant fanbases of their own.

Despite the fans rallying together, and a petition (https://www.change.org/p/kojima-productions-continue-working-on-silent-hills), it doesn't look like the project will be revived in it's announced form.

3.2.3. Some fans may repurpose their fanworks to publish their work in a mainstream capacity.

This may be the case, but I am interested to know if this causes ostracisation of the work and/or author from the fanbase, perhaps in the form of becoming a 'sell out', or if they are deemed to not value the fandom enough by repurposing their work for the sake of mainsteam publication.

It comes down to what the fan in creating for. Is it for personal gain, or is it to express their love of a fandom and create within it's boundaries.

There are plenty of places to publish non-licenced fan works with official characters (fanfiction.net, lulu.com) for no profit - so I wonder what a fan has to gain by changing their work for publication and ultimately profit.

3.2.5. Copyright is still a significant barrier to disseminating fanworks.

In any 'official' sense, yes. But I believe that fanworks are created and traded without many boundaries.

Self-publication and modding are examples of this.

3.5.3. Fans don’t make much money.

Consuming as a fan takes a lot of money, but I believe that there must be fans out there who offer services and make money from these.

Sites such as RedBubble, Etsy, eBay, and even Amazon are places where fans can sell their wares and make money.

Appendix N – Delphi round 2 statements by percentage of agreement

Participant #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	% of agreement
The online allows for a narrowing of physical and temporal space. (The online makes it easier to cross physical and time boundaries.)	5	5	4	5	3	4	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	5	4	4	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	93% agree
Fans do the same things online as they do offline.	2	3	2	3	4	2	2	4	2	2	3	2	2	2	1	3	2	1	4	3	2	2	2	1	1	2	4	2	4	2	67% disagree
The online is better suited to sharing and finding; the offline to creating.	3	4	5	3	5	1	4	4	3	2	4	4	1	2	4	3	3	2	3	1	4	3	3	4	1	3	4	4	4	4	47% agree
Most fan activity now takes place online.	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	5	5	2	4	2	3	1	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	3	3	4	4	67% agree
Offline, fans primarily engage in consumerism - buying and collecting merchandise.	2	2	3	4	4	4	2	3	5	4	1	2	1	2	2	4	3	1	4	2	4	4	3	1	2	3	3	2	3	4	43% disagree
Offline fan activity is more ephemeral, intense, and intimate.	2	4	4	3	3	2	2	3	3	2	4	2	1	2	2	3	3	3	5	2	4	3	2	3	2	4	4	4	3	4	37% disagree
Many franchises are born offline, so consumption of these franchises take place offline.	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	3	3	2	4	2	2	2	4	2	2	2	2	2	3	4	2	2	2	2	4	2	3	2	67% disagree

The offline is safer because fans don't have to put their work or fan identity on public display.	3	3	2	2	5	2	2	4	3	2	1	3	2	2	4	3	2	3	3	4	2	3	2	2	1	4	4	1	3	3	47% disagree
The offline allows first-hand experience of different cultural fan practices (e.g. food, dress, etc.)	4	4	4	4	5	5	3	4	5	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	2	3	2	2	4	4	4	2	4	3	4	5	3	4	67% agree
Fandom is hierarchical.	2	4	3	4	4	2	2	3	5	1	4	4	5	4	4	1	3	3	4	1	4	2	3	3	4	4	4	4	2	1	50% agree
Social media is rife with rumour, misinformation and disinformation; fans are far more ready to believe, misinterpret and spread these online than offline.	2	4	3	5	5	5	4	4	5	2	3	4	2	3	4	3	3	5	2	2	4	4	4	1	4	2	5	4	3	5	57% agree
Online resources are preferred for speed; print and analogue resources for accuracy.	2	4	4	5	4	4	2	4	4	4	3	3	2	3	2	2	4	3	2	2	4	4	2	1	2	2	4	4	4	2	47% agree
Libraries and reading groups can be places to seek information for fans.	3	4	4	4	2	3	4	4	3	2	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	5	3	3	2	4	4	2	4	2	3	4	4	3	53% agree
Print can be a more effective resource - especially for art. Image search online	3	4	2	2	1	2	2	3	4	4	4	4	2	1	4	2	2	3	3	2	4	3	2	1	2	2	5	5	3	2	50% disagree

can be cumbersome.																														
The source text (or the origin of a fandom) is the most important resource for getting information.	5	3	3	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	2	4	2	3	4	5	4	3	4	4	4	3	4	1	3	4	4	4	4	4	70% agree
Online resources are preferred.	5	4	4	3	4	4	3	3	4	4	2	4	2	3	3	5	3	4	5	4	4	4	3	5	5	4	4	5	2	4	67% agree
Fans' influence on producers is limited mainly to their purchasing power.	3	3	4	1	3	3	2	4	5	4	2	3	2	3	4	4	2	1	3	4	4	2	3	3	2	3	2	1	4	2	37% disagree
Some producers will recruit fans as 'intermediaries' between them and their fanbase.	4	4	3	3	2	4	4	3	5	2	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	5	4	4	2	3	4	4	5	3	3	1	4	3	57% agree
Producers and creators can't engage too much with fans and fanworks due to a fear of being accused of plagiarism.	2	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	2	3	4	2	4	4	3	4	3	2	1	4	4	3	2	3	2	3	4	4	2	47% agree
Fans should not have too much influence on producers as it can be detrimental to the franchise.	2	3	4	3	4	5	2	4	4	1	3	4	3	3	4	2	4	3	4	4	2	2	2	1	4	3	4	4	4	4	50% agree
Younger fans expect to influence their fandoms more than older ones	3	4	3	5	4	3	4	2	5	4	2	4	2	4	4	3	4	4	5	2	4	4	4	5	2	4	4	5	4	2	67% agree
Generally, fandom works on a gift	3	4	4	3	3	2	3	4	5	4	4	4	4	3	4	5	4	4	3	2	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	63% agree

economy and fans prefer not to exchange money for their work.																															
Copyright is still a significant barrier to disseminating fanworks.	4	4	5	2	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	3	4	3	2	3	3	4	3	5	4	2	2	2	2	4	4	5	57% agree
Fans are not interested in money, and engage in these activities primarily out of love.	4	4	4	2	5	1	4	5	5	5	3	4	4	3	4	5	4	3	3	5	3	3	4	3	3	4	4	5	3	4	63% agree
Fans don't make much money from fanworks.	4	4	4	1	5	3	4	3	5	2	2	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	2	4	3	4	3	4	3	3	4	3	4	57% agree
Male fans rarely get the same degree of scrutiny and mockery that female fans have to face.	3	5	3	5	5	4	4	3	4	4	4	5	4	5	4	4	4	5	5	5	1	3	4	5	2	2	2	5	4	5	73% agree
Despite copyright, fanworks are created and traded without many boundaries.	4	4	5	4	4	5	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	4	5	4	4	4	5	5	4	5	2	3	4	90% agree
Making money is important to fans, and they're finding more ways to make it.	3	2	4	4	2	2	3	1	4	2	4	2	2	4	4	3	3	4	3	5	3	4	2	4	3	3	3	2	3	2	33% agree/disagree /not sure
Fan tags are inconsistent and not always reliable.	4	5	3	4	4	4	3	4	4	2	4	3	3	3	4	4	4	3	5	2	4	4	4	3	4	4	5	3	3	4	63% agree
Using both online and offline resources	4	5	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	5	2	5	4	4	4	4	4	3	5	5	4	4	90% agree

together and according to my needs works best.																														
The differences between the online and offline activities of fans are blurred.	5	3	4	3	2	2	3	3	3	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	2	5	5	4	4	4	2	4	3	2	4	4	4	3	60% agree
Lurkers can be visible through the 'hits' they leave - number of visits, kudos, likes, favourites, reblogs, retweets, etc.	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	5	3	4	4	5	4	3	5	2	4	4	3	5	77% agree
A lot of what we can say about fans depends on the fandom they belong to, the producers/creators of their fandom, and the individual personality of the fan.	4	4	4	3	3	3	4	4	5	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	4	4	4	2	5	4	4	4	3	4	83% agree

Appendix O – Delphi study consensus statements – by theme

Detailed below is a list of all the statements that reached consensus, arranged by theme. Accompanying each statement is the corresponding round number, the percentage of agreement, and the quartile the statement belongs to.

Statements in black = agreement. Statements in red = disagreement. Statements in blue = not sure. Highlighted statements are in the top quartile.

THEME 1: FAN COMMUNITIES

1.1. Online community			
%	**Quartile**	**Round**	**Statement**
100	4	2	The internet enables increased a) reach; b) diversity; c) visibility and; d) discussion.
96	4	2	Significant and meaningful relationships can be formed online.
93 (+33)	4	3	The online allows for a narrowing of physical and temporal space. (The online makes it easier to cross physical and time boundaries.)
93	3	2	Fans can better tailor their fan experience and identity online than offline, benefitting from greater anonymity or exposure.
87	2	2	There is greater acceptance and normalisation of fan identity online.
77	1	2	Web 2.0 has enabled more dynamic interactions between fans and their fandoms.
77	2	2	The online better serves lesser known fandoms.
77	2	2	The web is used to recruit new fans.
76	1	2	Online activity depends on physical location and proximity to other fans.
73	1	2	The amount of online activity depends on the fandom, and whether it's based online or offline.
73	1	2	Online fandom can be divided into three functions: a) social; b) creative; c) interpretive.
70	1	2	The online is an entry point into a fandom.
67 (+17)	3	3	Fans do the same things online as they do offline.
67 (+30)	3	3	Most fan activity now takes place online.
47 (+14)	1	3	The online is better suited to sharing and finding; the offline to creating.

1.2. Offline community			
%	**Quartile**	**Round**	**Statement**
90	3	2	Fans still engage in many offline activities. It's just harder to spot.
84	2	2	Fans can recruit offline friends into a fandom.
80	2	2	Offline activity depends on physical location and proximity to other fans.
77	1	2	Offline fans show their fandom by what they say and wear.

76	1	2	Offline, fans use the post to ship over merchandise and physical fanworks.
67	1	2	There are generational differences - older fans do more offline than younger fans.
67 (+27)	3	3	Many franchises are born offline, so consumption of these franchises will take place offline.
67 (+14)	3	3	The offline allows first-hand experience of different cultural fan practices (e.g. food, dress etc.)
47 (+10)	1	3	The offline is safer because fans don't have to put their work or fan identity on public display.

1.3. Participatory culture			
%	**Quartile**	**Round**	**Statement**
94	4	2	Fans collaborate in large-scale projects as well as small-scale ones.
87	3	2	Fans support each other in non-fandom-related aspects of their everyday lives.

1.4. Social and knowledge capital			
%	**Quartile**	**Round**	**Statement**
100	4	2	Fans are collectors of information and news about their fandom.
94	4	2	Certain fans act as information sources or gatekeepers for the wider fan community.
77	1	2	Fans can gain their own following, and get job offers due to their work.
50 (+3)	1	3	Fandom is hierarchical.

1.5. Conflict			
%	**Quartile**	**Round**	**Statement**
90	3	2	Factions exist within fandoms, some in conflict with one another.
87	2	2	Stigma of fans and fandom is still a problem.
84	2	2	Fans can be actively ignored and/or rejected by producers or creators.
57 (-6)	2	3	Social media is rife with rumour, misinformation and disinformation; fans are far more ready to believe, misinterpret and spread these online than offline.

THEME 2: FAN INFORMATION BEHAVIOUR

2.1. Communication			
%	**Quartile**	**Round**	**Statement**
96	4	2	Due to the speed and easiness of communication, the internet has become the premier medium for fan communication.

77	1	2	Communication passes from producers to fans and from fans to other fans
76	1	2	Offline communication is still important.
70	1	2	Producers and creators monitor fan communication more often nowadays.

2.2. Information seeking			
%	**Quartile**	**Round**	**Statement**
94	4	2	Other fans are an important discovery tool and source of information.
93	3	2	Fandom is an information hub and a knowledge space.
90	3	2	Fans can change the way they look for information depending on their needs.
86	2	2	Secondary resources are also important.
84	2	2	Some fans are lurkers and their information behaviour is invisible.
84	2	2	Official accounts and sources are given precedence over unofficial ones, and rare information is prized.
77	1	2	Wikis are of growing importance.
53 (-1)	2	3	Libraries and reading groups can be places to seek information.
50 (+3)	1	3	Print can be a more effective resource – especially for art. Image search online can be cumbersome.
47 (+1)	1	3	Online resources are preferred for speed; print and analogue resources for accuracy.

2.3. Information organisation			
%	**Quartile**	**Round**	**Statement**
96	4	2	Fans collect information for other fans in the form of creating rec lists, link lists, wikis, tutorials, guides, etc.
87	2	2	Fan-made tags are useful in finding and sharing information.

2.4. Resources			
%	**Quartile**	**Round**	**Statement**
93	3	2	Fans use a wide range of resources, whether based online, offline, or specific to neither.
90	3	2	Resources used depend on a) the fan's own preference; b) the fandom itself (e.g. accessibility and availability of sources), and; c) what the information is being used for.
70 (+7)	4	3	The source of a fandom is the most important resource.
67 (+3)	3	3	Online resources are preferred.

2.5. Produsage & user-generated content			
%	**Quartile**	**Round**	**Statement**
90	3	2	Produsage (user-generated content) is a large part of fandom, manifested in the creation of fanworks and other fan-related resources.
90	3	2	Produsage also takes form in non-creative works such as beta-reading, reviewing, commenting, uploading photos and blogs, writing guides and walkthroughs etc.
87	2	2	Produsage can be a way of building on the source text, and/or filling in the gaps in the source text.
77	2	2	Collaboration and crowdsourcing is a large part of produsage activities.

THEME 3: SOCIAL EFFECT

3.1. Media industry			
%	**Quartile**	**Round**	**Statement**
94	4	2	Franchise producers acknowledge fans by incorporating Easter eggs and fan service into their products.
93	3	2	Fan influence depends on the fandom - some franchises are more receptive to fans than others.
90	3	2	Some creators will actively engage with fans and encourage fan activities.
90	3	2	The internet makes it easier for fans to interact with producers and vice versa.
83	2	2	Producers can exploit fan activity.
76	1	2	Fans can influence a franchise through petitioning, campaigning, creating 'noise', publicity, leaks, lowering ratings and crowdfunding projects.
67	1	2	Rarely, producers will employ fans.
67	1	2	Fans have a big influence on producers.
67 (+7)	3	3	Younger fans expect to influence their fandoms more than older ones.
57 (+14)	2	3	Some producers will recruit fans as 'intermediaries' between them and their fanbase.
50 (+2)	1	3	Fans should not have too much influence on producers as it can be detrimental to the franchise.
47 (+19)	1	3	Producers and creators can't engage too much with fans and fanworks due to a fear of being accused of plagiarism.

3.2. Publishing & copyright			
%	**Quartile**	**Round**	**Statement**
100	4	2	Fans can create and contribute to amateur information resources (e.g. wikis).
93	3	2	Fans have evolved their own editing and publishing practices (e.g. beta-reading).
90	3	2	Some fans may repurpose their fanworks to publish their work in a mainstream capacity.

63 (+3)	2	3	Generally fandom works on a gift economy and fans prefer not to exchange money for their work.
57 (+4)	2	3	Copyright is still a significant barrier to disseminating fanworks.

3.3. Education & information provision			
%	**Quartile**	**Round**	**Statement**
100	4	2	New technologies have changed how we create, edit and distribute media.
90	3	2	Some fans will mentor and teach novice fans new skills.
86	2	2	Fans can be motivated by their fandom to take professional classes to learn new skills.
84	2	2	Fan conventions often hold workshops and academic panels.

3.4. Charities, advocacy, activism & support			
%	**Quartile**	**Round**	**Statement**
100	4	2	Fans support one another through mental, practical and physical problems.
94	4	2	Fans can raise awareness of issues through social media campaigns and other forms of activism.
83	2	2	Crowdfunding is an important activity, for charitable or fan-related projects.

3.5. Pro-ams & professional amateurs			
%	**Quartile**	**Round**	**Statement**
80	2	2	Some fans act in a semi-professional capacity.
63 (+16)	2	3	Fans are not interested in money, and engage in these activities primarily out of love.
57 (+14)	2	3	Fans don't make much money from fanworks.

ADDITIONAL ROUND 3 QUESTIONS

%	Quartile	Statement
90	4	Despite copyright, fanworks are created and traded without many boundaries.
90	4	Using both online and offline resources together and according to my needs works best.
83	4	A lot of what we can say about fans depends on the fandom they belong to, the producers/creators of their fandom, and the individual personality of the fan.
77	4	Lurkers can be visible through the 'hits' they leave - number of visits, kudos, likes, favourites, reblogs, retweets, etc.
73	4	Male fans rarely get the same degree of scrutiny and mockery that female fans have to face.
63	2	Fan tags are inconsistent and not always reliable.
60	2	The differences between the online and offline activities of fans are blurred.

Appendix P – Delphi study statements that did not reach consensus

Statements that did not reach consensus

Detailed below is a list of all the statements that did not reach consensus, arranged by theme. Accompanying each statement is the corresponding round number, the percentage of agreement, and the quartile the statement belongs to.

Statements in black = agreement. Statements in red = disagreement.

1.2. Offline community

43% (+6%) Offline, fans primarily engage in consumerism - buying and collecting merchandise.

37% (+11%) Offline fan activity is more ephemeral, intense, and intimate.

3.1. Media industry

37% (-3%) Fans' influence on producers is limited mainly to their purchasing power.

Round 3 additional questions

33% Making money is important to fans, and they're finding more ways to make it.

Borderline statements

These are statements that were above the APMO (46%) for round 3, but were NOT considered majority statements (i.e. did not achieve over 50% agreement).

1.1. Online community

47% (+14%) The online is better suited to sharing and finding; the offline to creating.

1.2. Offline community

47% (+10%) The offline is safer because fans don't have to put their work or fan identity on public display.

1.4. Social & knowledge capital

50% (+3%) Fandom is hierarchical.

2.2. Information seeking

47% (+1%) Online resources are preferred for speed; print and analogue resources for accuracy.

50% (+3%) Print can be a more effective resource - especially for art. Image search online can be cumbersome.

3.1. Media industry

47% (+21%) Producers and creators can't engage too much with fans and fanworks due to a fear of being accused of plagiarism.

50% (+2%) Fans should not have too much influence on producers as it can be detrimental to the franchise.

Appendix Q – Delphi round 3 participant comments – thematically coded

Round 3 – Comments

Narrowing of space and time – 3

Online & offline activities are different – 6

Consumption – 2

Safety – 6

Hierarchy – 3

Fandom is looked down upon – 3

Information gatekeeping – 4

Print vs digital – 9

Making money – 12

Creator engagement with fans – 5

Misinformation – 6

Misogyny in fandom – 3

Depends on the fandom – 3

Diversity in fandom – 3

Tagging and information organisation – 5

Generational differences – 2

Online and offline are blurred – 4

Copyright – 4

Participant 3

1. The narrowing of space is definitely true insofar as people who might never have met now have the opportunity to share their love of the same fandom. I think some fandoms would never reach a critical mass were it not for the internet.
2. I imagine fans offline to be a little more intense than fans online and probably do things like go to conventions and cosplay. The internet allows people to open up more than they would in the public eye thus revealing their hidden nerdiness.
3. Well, with the search tools available on the internet it must be better at searching and finding than offline.
4. I just intuitively feel this is true…but I admit I may be wrong.
5. I mean, there are cons to go to and cosplay and what not.

1. Sure…irl fans of your fandom can be hard to find and in person interaction is always more intimate that online.
2. Most franchises are born to be consumed and may just as easily be consumed on the internet as anywhere else. Ex: Marve's digital comics ulimited for 9.99/mo
3. The offline is less safe…precisely because you have to put yourself out there. You don't have to put your fan work on display in either forum. You could simply write reviews and engage in

discussions online if you so chose.
4. sure
5. I mean...some people produce better works than others...and some fandoms are looked down upon by others or by society in general (twilight). But I don't know if I would call it hierarchy.
6. the information moves faster, but the processing of that information may or may not be any different than in person.

1. sure...wikis can be wrong. The paper comics and printed publications are like the primary sources of our fandoms history.
2. Probably, but I've never done it.
3. I can't imagine this is true.
4. Idk...fandoms can be transformative. i may only need a sliver of cannon to populate my imagination.
5. I prefer them for ease of use, but if i were a comic book historian I would probably prefer print.

1. agree
2. /shrug...idk
3. i've heard this is a thing
4. I feel like we all like fan involvement when it brings us a story we like and hate it when it brings us a story we don't like. Even worse is when the creators avoid certain plotlines for fear of pandering. It's best for creators to just create their stories.
5. no idea
6. it has to be that way by law.
7. yeah
8. for the most part
9. not unless they convert them a la 50 shades

2. I think more people view fanfiction as a step to publishing due to some prominent successes.
3. I have pretty complex opinions on this...scrutiny, sometimes...mockery, not necessarily.
8. With things like meetup I can see how that happens

Participant 4

online resources are far more accesible, but also less reliable and prone to error and misinformation

The majority of fans don't make much money with creative work but that's because creative work in general is not always fairly payed, with some notable exceptions, that can be found also among fans.

about question 2, I feel mysoginy still reings also in fandom regardless of the gender composition of fandoms. The type of aggression changes, not the double standard

about question 3, while I feel each fandom has its own specific history, some trends may be identified regardless of the fandom you are scrutinizing. It would be very interesting and instructive to have enough time and language skills to dwell into the non-english/non mother tongue speaking niches of fandom. As for myself, I can read spanish without difficulties but I have no time or energies to get in touch with spanish-speaking fandoms too, even though it would be extremely interesting given the sizable population you get when considering all of latin america.

Participant 5

The third question was kind of confusing for me because I had different views on each part of it. I think "A lot of what we can say about fans depends on the fandom" would have the most interesting responses, as my experience as a 'shipper' has been to be automatically lumped into a stereotypical category by fellow fans of the series that contains my two favorite characters.

Participant 11

Regarding money, it really depends on the case. Some fan artists and cosplayers use fan art and commissions to get by but in the fan fiction writing community it might be less important.

Participant 14

For 'gift economy', as per Nele Noppe's research, it's important (IMO) to clarify if you're talking about fans in an Anglo-American context, as this is not uniform across the board. Not to use you as a scapegoat for such issues, since they're common in a lot of fan-related research, but I think it's really critical to clarify what "fan" and "fandom" is from a cultural/national perspective here.

Participant 17

I don't do the same things online as I do off. I read online. I write online. I talk about my fandom online. Because there are very few people within physical proximity who share my fandom, I don't do those things offline. (I don't even admit to reading and writing fandom stuff to anyone offline.) I think a lot of fandom activities do take place offline, because people meet online and work out ways to get together and do fandom things offline. And there are cons where people gather. But I've been to one con in 3.5 years. I'm about to make a trip during which I expect to meet up with fandom people. But most of my fandom stuff still happens online.

Offline fan activity, such as a con, is more intense. It's amazing having so many people who share your interests in one place, being able to spend an entire weekend wallowing in the thing you love instead of having to fit moments of online wallowing in around real life. I'm not sure it's more intimate, though. There are things I'm willing to say online that I just don't in person -- at least, not unless it's to someone I already know from our online interaction will be receptive.

Fandom can be hierarchical, if you let it. There are the "Tumblr famous." I, thankfully, had no clue when I got into fandom and talked to them freely not realizing they were somehow "above" the average fan. And I found real people who were happy to talk to me. So while I recognize the hierarchy, I don't really play by its rules.

Social media can be rife with bad information. But fans also can be the front line in nipping such bad information in the bud, making sure it doesn't spread and do more damage.

Online resources aren't necessarily more reliable. But they're good from the standpoint that they're easier to access. My local library doesn't have nearly the collection of materials that I can find online.

I think it's always good to know what the canon of a fandom is before creating your own head canon. It's a good first step. (When I plunged into the "Sherlock" fandom, my first step after watching S1 was to buy the complete ACD collection and read it all. Knowing it, even though I'm nowhere near an expert, is a huge help in understanding a lot of what happens in the show and in the fandom.

I think the money depends on the fan. Some have turned their fandom efforts into real-life jobs that pay the bills. Most, however, do it for love and don't expect money.

Tags can be unreliable. But sometimes it helps to know who's doing the tagging. Everyone tends to develop their own style. If you know this person tags this way, it's not unreliable. But if you're treating this person's tags according to that person's tagging style, you might have a problem.

Participant 18

Given an opportunity to look at these again, apparently I do not agree with some of my past opinions :) As for the first, i think online definitely allows for a narrowing of time and space - it's much easier to connect with people all over the world online than off, obviously. For the second, I'm not sure why I marked neither, but given an opportunity to rethink, I do believe that fans do different things online and off - online allows for more anonymity, which definitely contributes to things like fan fiction being much more prevalent. And while you can cosplay by yourself, it's

probably a lot more fun to meet up at a con with a bunch of friends and strangers who are also into that. I still think that you can use both online and offline worlds to share, find, and create, and I also still think that plenty of fan activity happens offline. More than consumerism.

1) I think that offline activity CAN be more ephemeral, intense, and intimate, but not necessarily. Online activity can also be all of those things. It depends on what kind of activity you are engaging in, and how you feel about it.
2) I think most franchises are born offline? Even though something is born offline, it can certainly have a really intense online fan base/fan activities.
3) I think online and offline can both be dangerous but in different ways - you can be harassed online (e.g. on Twitter) in some really intense ways that you can't in the offline world, but offline might feel more immediate. Or you could get harassment online that threatens you offline, like if someone threatened to come to your house or place of work.
4) I think online can offer some pretty interesting insights into different cultural fan practices and conversations - I'm white, but I've spent a lot of time this past year reading "black Twitter" and following and reading African-American fans on Tumblr and other blog sites, and that's helped me rethink some of my own opinions and experiences both as a fan and a citizen. I can see those communities talk to each other online in a way that I wouldn't offline.
5) Depends!
6) I don't know if I think that fans are more ready to believe and spread rumor, etc., online, but I think the online environment makes it a lot easier to get bad information out.

1) I still think this depends - online resources are better for speed and, as previously discussed, often have bad information. But print and analog resources often have bad information, too. In addition to being white, I'm also a Southerner (U.S. South) and a historian, and I can tell you from personal experience that my primary (elementary, middle, high) school textbooks often had terrible information about our history. That's getting away from fandom a bit, but I still think it depends on the resource in fandom as well. I wouldn't trust a print newspaper's depiction of fan fiction, for instance. Post-Fifty Shades, mainstream sources (both print and online) were pretty terrible at talking about fan fiction.
2) Love libraries. Lots of info available there.
3) Depends!
4) Source texts are important, but they don't have to be the most important thing ever.
5) I do think online resources are preferred, mostly because there's so much more stuff online and it's easier to get to.

1) With the rise of the internet and blogging and Twitter and all of the ways to engage with these things online, I think fans have more of a voice than ever, and creators are paying attention to that. It's not just about buying mercy, it's about reviews and word of mouth and perception.
2) Yeah, we've all seen that happen.
3) I think some people are afraid of this but I don't think it holds a lot of water legally.
4) I would certainly like to see, for example, some Supernatural fans have MORE influence, at leas the ones who would prefer the show stop treating its female characters terribly. I think it depends on the show and the influence and how it affects the story.
5) Again, because of all of the ways we now have to talk back and talk to each other about our favorite things, I think younger fans do expect to influence stuff more - but that will probably change in the future.
6) This seems to be true to me, but I can see it changing in the future.
7) I think a lot of fan activity comes from a place of love, but I also think that fans are human beings who live in a capitalist economy who want and deserve to be paid for their labor.
8) I mostly agree, but I think their are circumstances when fans could make money off of their works.

2) I think fan works are being created and disseminated regardless of copyright, but I think it depends on how you define boundary - I think of a computer as being a boundary. Access to the internet is a boundary. Signing up for Facebook or Twitter or AO3 or Tumblr, etc., is a boundary. I think we cross a lot of boundaries to share fan works - they're pretty permeable right now, but they are still boundaries. Depending on the site, our work could be taken down tomorrow, whether by corporate decision (Livejournal, I'm looking at you), or through lack of funds to keep a site going (I'm very much hoping this never happens to AO3).

Participant 19

For [4] I think fan activity in the communication/creativity sense. I do think a lot of watching TV etc is still taking place offline, but that that wasn't meant here.

[3] online is safer because you can't get harassed, assaulted, or raped online!
[4] it's more and faster but I don't think there's an actual qualitative difference

[9] One 50 Shades and After averages out thousands upon thousands of not getting paid fans. The question Not many fans make money would be more accurate and that would be a resounding yes. The questions fans as a whole don't make much id't true anymore but it's a tiny amount of fans making a lot of money.

Participant 20

Regarding the question about misinformation and disinformation I feel like it's actually no different from general human behaviour, I guess there will always be misinformation online and offline but it's how you verify it that matters

Participant 22

I think creation is no better offline than online. It depends of the people who create with you.

Participant 25

Re: question 2, I definitely don't do all the same things offline as I do online! If I want to talk about my favorite kink tropes or whether my OTP would be better served by a coffeeshop AU or a high school AU, I don't bring it up in the staff room at work. If it does occur offline, it needs to be in a perceived safe space with people I trust, and even then I'm still more comfortable having certain conversations online.

Re: question 3, I think positioning online and offline spaces oppositionally does a disservice to the benefits of both. Sharing and creating aren't mutually exclusive, and a lot of creations are born of sharing in the first place. Fans don't create things in isolation and go online solely to share them with others. So much of the creative process itself occurs online. I have written some fanfiction exclusively thanks to chatting with friends online, I've created graphics inspired by other people's fic, and there are many occasions of fan meta and theories that gradually become more and more fleshed out via online conversations between fans. So yes, sharing is occurring, but creating is too.

Re: question 3, I think the offline is in some ways riskier since for many people divulging personal information such as their real name or where they live to fandom friends is a very significant step, particularly when there are horror stories of people having their fandom identities leaked to their employers or family members by people they trust. Not to mention plenty of fans who engage in things like vending at cons absolutely do put their work and identity on display.

Re question 1: I'm sure why online information would be considered less accurate, particularly when so much information is disseminated solely online and not via print at all. The immediacy of online information, and the ease with which it can be shared, is an enormous advantage.

Re question 4: It often depends on the fans' relationship with that canon. In some cases, fans become dissatisfied with the canon and choose to stop consuming it while still continuing to participate in the fandom.

Re question 2: This has been happening more and more steadily when it used to be seen as anathema to the producers/consumers model! Social media lets producers tap into their fan base more readily than ever and, in the case of media producers such as MTV, reach out to fans for collaborative purpose.

Re copyright: This line is thinning as well, especially since fic authors have begun receiving book deals based on their work on platforms like Wattpad. The practice of "filing off serial numbers" in general is becoming more popular as fans make the jump into the publishing world.

I agree that making money is important to some fans who are indeed trying to find more ways to make it, but this varies quite a bit. I think fandom has been seen as a gift economy for so long that some fans are reluctant to come around to the idea of receiving money in exchange for fanworks, particularly authors. Many fan artists, on the other hand, seem to have a more open-minded mentality and are interested in at least exploring the possibility of making money from their creations.

Participant 26

I think the first statement can be true or untrue depending on the franchise (i.e. some franchises are cognisant of, engage with and react more readily to fans and their input).

Statement 1: I'm not sure lurkers in general engage even to this extent (i.e. blogging, retweeting, liking etc.). I think true lurkers do not socially engage and purely consume.

Statement 2: I agree with this, although 'traded' implies that you need to provide fanwork in order to receive, access or consume fanwork.

Participant 28

For clarity, I will refer to the statements as number vertically from 1 -5.

1) I have changed my answer to reflect a better understanding of its meaning. Yes, the online does allow people to communicate regardless of which country or time zone they are in. Of course, certain areas are more likely to be active at certain times, but I assume that fandoms are probably active 24hrs a day, and that almost all fans will have a window in which they can interact with each other, regardless of time or space.

2) If in the same conditions that the online allows (eg. in presence of like minded people), I see why there should be no limitation to what fans do online or offline. Fandom is about validating yourself through your relationships with others.

3) The online can be better suited for sharing and finding, but this is only limited to the information or artifacts that are available. Some fandoms may be better suited to the offline, but I don't believe that this polarizes either to one mode.
What matters is how the fan goes about their fandom.

4) As a person who predominantly indulges in my fandom offline, and by myself, I can only say again that it depends on the fans' decisions.
However, I am very sure that there are areas of fandom that take place more online (e.g. social aspects as they are easily accessible to people), but this cannot detract from the vast amount that happens offline, and is then shared online.

5) To consume is to identify with a fandom, not only to outwardly as in clothing, but it may be for your own personal reasons (e.g. knowledge based).
To use myself as an example. I have recently gone through a Batman phase, which saw me in the last month consume video games, items of clothing, a figurine, art books, novels and information books. Some of those items are to identify as a fan on the outside, most of them are for my own personal pleasure, and for the joy of delving into the world building aspect of the Batman universe.

1) In that they are physical encounters with other fans that need you to engage, and be personable.

2) I feel that consumption is defined as physical, often official items, therefore it is more likely to take place offline.
However, if we are defining it as the consumption of knowledge, artifacts and fan created things then it is safe to say that this would be more fervent online. The statement does not specify this.

3) People who don't want, or need, to display their fan identity can do so in the offline, and only

expose these things to people they want to. In this way the offline is safer.

4) The offline will allow for a more authentic experience, they will more than likely affirm what they have experienced online.

5) This has not got a (Strongly Agree) because I feel that there are some fans who do not behave in a hierarchical way, but I feel that as an entity, fandom is hierarchical.
People who have more knowledge, or are able to create things that others can't will always be the most popular and sought after fans in a group, due to their 'cultural capital'.

1) I think that this is likely for most people. For myself I prefer print for accuracy, and most of the time I can't even be bothered to look online for resources as I hate doing it (then having to look at a screen for reference)!

2) It would be less specialised, but in terms of more general information it may be a good place to seek information.

4) I presume this is only if the fan wants to stay true to the fandom.

5) I cannot speak for myself, but I presume that the easy access and speed of gathering resources would make the online preferred.

1) Again, I have seen things in TV, film and video games that have been changed directly as a result of fans influencing producers.
e.g. - Star Wars Episode 7 going back to more practical effects.
- Characters being 'brought back to life' in Tv series (e.g. Prison Break's Dr. Sara Tancredi)
- Mass Effect 3's ending, Boss sequence to allow stealth takedowns in Deus Ex: Human Revolution Director's Cut.

2) I cannot speak from experience, but I believe this to be feasible.

3) I think if given the right credit, fans would be happy for their work to be used.

4) Fandom is the place to change what you don't like!

5) As younger fans are more technologically minded, and their probably tend to use the online more than their older counterparts (and believe in its power to change things), I believe this to be true.

6) Primarily yes, but I feel that they would pay if they had to. Also, I don't think that fans want to pay for items as somehow they become less personal.

7) I think fans already know how to get around copyright (or they just ignore it) when disseminating their work.

8) I still agree with this statement, but I believe that if this were to turn into a money making opportunity, fans would do it (e.g. professional cos players)

2) I think that males are probably more scrutinized for creating - especially in the realm of fanart and fanfiction, as these are more 'female' activities. Other areas like cosplay, modding, videos may be less so.

5) We are all guilty of having our own stereo-types of fans, from Star Wars fan boys, to 'Cumber-Bitches' to fans of Rap music. These stereotypes are fed by the media, but how the fans want themselves to be portrayed as this all comes down to fan identity.

6) If they tag at all.

7) The boundary of activities that can be performed online and offline are themselves blurred.

Appendix R – Case study interview consent form



CONSENT FORM

Title of Study: *Serious leisure in the digital world: exploring the information behaviours of fan communities*

		Please initial box
1.	I agree to take part in the above City University London research project. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the participant information sheet, which I may keep for my records. I understand this will involve: • responding, by email, to questions asking me about personal opinions that pertain to my experiences as a fan; • making myself available for at least one email interview; • using a computer to respond to questions and to communicate with the researcher.	
2.	This information will be held and processed for the following purpose(s): • data and content analysis • doctoral research • publication in doctoral thesis and other academic publications I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that could lead to the identification of any individual will be disclosed in any reports on the project, or to any other party. No identifiable personal data will be published. The identifiable data will not be shared with any other organisation. Participant identities will be anonymised in interview transcripts, and removed from social media datasets. I understand that I will be given a transcript of data concerning me for my approval before it is included in the write-up of the research.	
3.	I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalized or disadvantaged in any way.	
4.	I agree to City University London recording and processing this information about me. I understand that this information will be used only for the purpose(s) set out in this statement and my consent is conditional on the University complying with its duties and obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998.	
5.	I agree to take part in the above study.	

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	Signature	Date

When completed, 1 copy for participant; 1 copy for researcher's file.

Appendix S – Case study interview participant information sheet



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Title of study *Serious leisure in the digital world: exploring the information behaviours of fan communities*

We would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether you would like to take part it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study is part of a third year Ph.D. research project. Very few studies in Library and Information Science (LIS) look into the information behaviour of fans. The purpose of the study is to develop an understanding of fan information behaviour. This will allow us to inform services offered by library and information professionals and educators. This phase of the research requires participants in a case study over the period of February to approximately July 2016. The case study will look at the information behaviour of Romy fans within the context of 3 sites – Tumblr, Archive of Our Own (AO3) and Etsy. The study's results will be related to existing theories of information behaviour, and will be analysed for what they show about the relationship of fans to information.

Why have I been invited?

Participants in the case study are men and women over the age of 18 who a) are Romy fans and; b) who are active users of Tumblr, AO3 or Etsy. Participants were selected by the researcher via a survey of active users on these 3 sites. They were selected on the basis of their levels of activity in the Romy fandom community, as measured by their online productivity, particularly a) posting and tagging fanworks and other fan-related information; b) voluntary work on fansites, such as tag-wrangling on AO3, and; c) selling, trading, exchanging or commissioning fanworks online.

Do I have to take part?

Participation in the project is voluntary, and you can choose not to participate in part or all of the project. You can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign a

consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

What will happen if I take part?
You will be invited to take part in an interview that will explore your fan experiences and practices on Tumblr, AO3 or Etsy. Some generic questions will be asked (e.g. gender, age range) at the start of the interview, for statistical purposes only. These will be followed by some questions on how you use one of the sites mentioned above. The questions will particularly relate to how tagging is used to categorise fanworks; the gatekeeping of information in fandom and; the sale of fanworks online.
Depending on your responses to these initial questions, follow-up questions may be asked in order to explore related areas or to clarify your responses.

What do I have to do?
You will be required to answer some questions about how you – as a Romy fan – use either Tumblr, AO3 or Etsy, which you will then email back to the researcher. You may be asked some more additional questions. You may request to leave the study at any time.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?
There are no foreseeable harms in the participation of this academic exercise.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
Participation in this study will help to better understand how fans use information in their activities, which is an area of information science that remains unexplored. The results will also help to ascertain whether fans use information in similar or different ways to other sub-sections of the population.

What will happen when the research study stops?
If the study ends unexpectedly, all data supplied by the participant will be kept, as per University policy, for 10 years, after which it will be deleted and destroyed, *unless* the researcher requests consent to keep the information for academic study.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?
All data provided by the participant will be stored on the researcher's password-protected personal laptop. All data will anonymized and will not be made available to another person. Data will be kept confidentially up to a period of 10 years if the participant withdraws, or if the study terminates unexpectedly.

What will happen to results of the research study?

The results will be used in the writing up of this Ph.D. thesis, which may be published in an abridged form at a further date. Results may also be used for presentation in journal articles and/or conference papers. Participants may obtain a copy of the resulting thesis and/or summary of results by contacting the researcher at the appropriate email address.

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

Participation in this academic exercise is voluntary and the participant is free to withdraw from the research at any time without prejudice. The participant need give no reason or justification for withdrawing. In such cases the University will retain data collected, confidentially, for a period of up to 10 years, as per University policy.

What if there is a problem?

If you have any problems, concerns or questions about this study, you should ask to speak to a member of the research team. If you remain unhappy and wish to complain formally, you can do this through the University complaints procedure. To complain about the study, you need to phone 020 7040 3040. You can then ask to speak to the Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee and inform them that the name of the project is: *Serious leisure in the digital world: exploring the information behaviours of fan communities.*

You could also write to the Secretary at:
Anna Ramberg
Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee
Research Office, E214
City University London
Northampton Square
London
EC1V 0HB
Email: [redacted]

City University London holds insurance policies which apply to this study. If you feel you have been harmed or injured by taking part in this study you may be eligible to claim compensation. This does not affect your legal rights to seek compensation. If you are harmed due to someone's negligence, then you may have grounds for legal action.

Who has reviewed the study?
This study has been approved by City University London Computer Science Research Ethics Committee

Further information and contact details

Ludovica Price	Lyn Robinson
Ph.D. Candidate	Ph.D. Supervisor
[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Appendix T – Case study interview guides

Case Studies: Interview Guides

Tumblr users

Focus on the tag use – adding tags to posts, and uses tags to search for other posts. Learn more about the different types of tagging used and their context: a) classificatory tagging (tagging that classifies or categorises a post); b) affective tagging (tagging that describes the feelings of the poster); c) explicative tagging (tagging that explains the post or the poster's actions/intentions); d) misc tagging (any other type that doesn't fit into the aforementioned categories).

1) Is tagging useful in organising your own fanworks and posts?
2) Is it easy to use tags to search for other fanworks/posts?
3) How do you think other people share fanworks on Tumblr?
4) What kinds of tags do you see used on Tumblr?
5) What do you think of Tumblr's tagging system? Do you think it could be improved?

Archive of our Own users

Focus on the tag-wranglers i.e. the tag moderators on AO3. Focus on tag standardisation and modification; the voluntary aspects of tag-wrangling tasks; tag-wrangling as crowdsourcing.

1) What do you do as a tag wrangler?
2) What is important about tag-wrangling?
3) Tag-wrangling might be considered a monotonous task – why do you do it?
4) Do you see yourself as a gatekeeper of your fandom, and if so, how?
5) What do you think of AO3's tagging system? Do you think it could be improved?

Etsy users

Focus on how Etsy fan-sellers tag their work, and how they feel about how selling copyrighted work. Look at how successful tagging seems to be, and whether sellers think they are useful.

1) How do you feel about selling work that uses copyrighted characters?
2) Do you think other fans disapprove of selling fanworks because of copyright laws, or don't they care?
3) How do you market your work on Etsy? Do you use promotion tools? Do you 'advertise' on social media, etc.?
4) Do you tag/categorise your work on Etsy?
5) What do you think of the tagging system on Etsy? Do you think it could be improved?
6) Do you think there is a difference between selling fanart/fancrafts and selling fanfiction?

Appendix U – Case study interview questions

Case Studies: Interview Questions

Tumblr users

1. How do you use tags on Tumblr?
2. Is tagging useful in organising your own fanworks and posts?
3. Is it easy to use tags to search for other fanworks/posts?
4. How do you think other people share fanworks on Tumblr?
5. What kinds of tags do you see used on Tumblr?
6. What do you think of Tumblr's tagging system? Do you think it could be improved?
7. As someone who aggregates the work of Romy fans and shares them with others on Tumblr, do you think that your tagging behaviour is different compared to those who post their own work, or from other Romy posters on Tumblr? (Additional question for Participant A).

Archive of our Own users

1. What do you do as a tag wrangler?
2. What is important about tag-wrangling?
3. Tag-wrangling might be considered a monotonous task – why do you do it?
4. Do you see yourself as a gatekeeper of your fandom, and if so, how?
5. What do you think of AO3's tagging system? Do you think it could be improved?

Etsy users

1. How do you use tags on Etsy?
2. Do you think buyers use Etsy tags to search, and do you think they find them useful?
3. How do you feel about selling work that uses copyrighted characters?
4. Do you think other fans disapprove of selling fanworks because of copyright laws, or don't they care?
5. How do you market your work on Etsy? Do you use promotion tools? Do you 'advertise' on social media, etc.?
6. What do you think of the tagging system on Etsy? Do you think it could be improved?
7. Do you think there is a difference between selling fanart/fancrafts and selling fanfiction?
8. Do you consider yourself a fan, and if so, how does that affect your production and selling activities? (Additional question)

Appendix V – Case study interview participant responses

Participant A

1) How do you use tags on Tumblr?

I try to encapsulate an image (or other post) using as few words as possible. I'm thinking of the audience I have in mind when I tag things, so I put in character names, relationship names, and artists/creators. Beyond that, I occasionally make a smart-ass remark in the tags, instead of having as permanent commentary.

2) Is tagging useful in organising your own fanworks and posts?

It is. When trying to find a past post of my own, it's not hard for me to recall what tags I used, making locating it easy.

3) Is it easy to use tags to search for other fanworks/posts?

It really depends on what fandom. Some character names and fandom phrases are unique, making them fun to browse through. Other fandoms are difficult. Take the tag "Rogue," for instance. While I may be looking for an X-Men character, many other things come up: an anime character, crossfit gear, roleplaying character class, and non-English versions of Harry Potter.

4) How do you think other people share fanworks on Tumblr?

Most people who post on Tumblr seem relatively savvy, knowing that they should mention character and fandom names.

Some people are inconsiderate by not posting the creator's name when it comes to fan works, but over time, most posters learn that it's a Tumblr faux-pas.

5) What kinds of tags do you see used on Tumblr?

Generally, very succinct tags that sum up the post. They're either fandom (#PokemonGo seems to be everywhere right now), social commentary (i.e. #stayawoke), or aesthetic (i.e. #nature). Occasionally it seems like someone brought out their thesaurus and came up with every tag that could be remotely related to the subject (i.e. listing all the Avengers under a picture of Hawkeye).

6) What do you think of Tumblr's tagging system? Do you think it could be improved?

The tagging system works rather well, although it could use a filter or two. The aforementioned issues when searching through common terms could be aided by having a way to exclude other words. There have also been issues with spam, where completely incorrect tags were applied by spambots and they brought up disturbing results. Manually blocking all of those spambots was irritating.

7) As someone who aggregates the work of Romy fans and shares them with others on Tumblr, do you think that your tagging behaviour is different compared to those who post their own work, or from other Romy posters on Tumblr?

I tend to tag fan works rather sparingly - character name(s), relationship name, type of fan work, and artist name. I don't put any commentary in the tags, as I would do sometimes for professional works, because I don't want to influence the end user's opinion of the work. Many

other posters of work that is not their own put complimentary commentary (i.e. #too cute!) but seem to also put up the information that I do. When people put up their own work, they rarely put up relationship names, but they do tend to put in character names. Occasionally they tag something to the effect that it's their work, but little else. There is a section of people who put commentary in their work, most of which downplays their own abilities. They will tag #sorry it's not good, or #myshittyart, and so on. I'm never sure if they put it there as a disclaimer because they genuinely don't believe in the quality of their work and want to head off any hecklers, or if they are fishing for compliments.

Participant B

1) How do you use tags on Tumblr?

More often than not I use the tags to voice personal opinions so I don't ruin the aesthetic of the original post. If I have time I go the extra distance and tag the name of the artist/writer as well as characters or places shown in the post, but many times I'm on mobile and just speed re-post without tags.

2) Is tagging useful in organising your own fanworks and posts?

Somewhat. On the mobile app it never quite seems to bring up the picture/post I'm looking for and I've never been able to figure out why. The actual website is more helpful (when viewed from my home computer), especially when it does that collage thing.

3) Is it easy to use tags to search for other fanworks/posts?

Pretty easy most of the time, unless you're looking for a very specific thing. For example, I was trying to find an image of a muscular male bending over in profile view. What I ended up with was a lottttt of porn. After that it's trial and error until I find a helpfully descriptive word— in that case, 'boudoir' and 'photography' were the most effective means of procuring the correct image to use as a drawing reference.

4) How do you think other people share fanworks on Tumblr?

Reposting from someone they follow seems to be the most popular method of sharing, although I know of one poster who makes a point of sharing the art/post directly from the original poster (as a sign of respect). As far as a lack of respect, I've also frequently seen works reposted with no link back to the original artist/writer. There are two people I follow who become incensed whenever this happens to their own work.

5) What kinds of tags do you see used on Tumblr?

Mostly just tags of the character(s) names, both superhero/villain and actual. Sometimes they add their own identifying slogan or tag a friend. Rarely there are personal opinions or replies to the tags in the original post. My personal favorite thing is when followers say nice or supportive things in the tags when they repost my stuff.

6) What do you think of Tumblr's tagging system? Do you think it could be improved?

I absolutely think there's room for improvement, especially on the mobile app. I would like to be able to see the collected tags from all posters in the same place instead of clicking on each repost and reading their tags (I don't know if that can be done now- if it is an available option, Tumblr is very vague on how to utilize it).

Participant C

1. What do you do as a tag wrangler?

As a tag wrangler, I do my best to keep my corners of fandoms tidy so that other fans can find what they're looking for. That includes making sure that tags that are functionally the same get stuck together (including getting translations for tags not in English), that popular fandom concepts get added to our filters for ease of finding, and that tags end up in the right fandoms so they can be found again.

2. What is important about tag-wrangling?

Fan writing is increasingly centralized at Ao3, while our day-to-day fannish expressions are ever more decentralized. I think fan writing is amazing and important, but there are sometimes some disconnects in how different parts of a fandom talk about a topic or a character. That shouldn't keep them from being able to see each others' work. For example, tagging your fic as "Romy" would keep it from being seen by people who weren't familiar with that smushname unless a wrangler hooked them together on the backend.

3. Tag-wrangling might be considered a monotonous task – why do you do it?

Tag wrangling is a way I can contribute to a community that I love. I like this kind of work and, with the decline of livejournal, I felt less connected to the community and less like I was pulling my own weight. Wrangling both lets me meet people from across fandom and help out.

4. Do you see yourself as a gatekeeper of your fandom, and if so, how?

I don't think of myself as a gatekeeper, mostly because I hate that word. I think that one of the things that keeps me out of a fandom or hobby is when there are gatekeepers. It makes asking where to start daunting. The Ao3 Terms and Conditions and the Wrangling First Principles both strictly prevent us from being gatekeepery. We can't change tags, we can't tell users how to tag in any official capacity ("describe not proscribe"). Our goal is to organize tags in a way that fans will be able to find what they're looking for. To do that, we have to speak their language and use the words they use.

5. What do you think of AO3's tagging system? Do you think it could be improved?

I think the tagging system is honestly amazing considering the insane strain it's under. It's always being updated and it has hiccups (the request for a way to denote primary pairing in a story comes up often), but I don't think its architects expected a million works in fandoms that range from RPF to anthropomorfic to worlds with their own deep languages. The filtering out of tags you don't want to see could be streamlined, though. It presently takes a fair bit of jumping through hoops to

Participant D

1. What do you do as a tag wrangler?

When a user creates a new, never-before-used tag, it shows up in what we call the "unwrangled bins" of every wrangler assigned to the fandoms tagged on the work. What wranglers such as myself do is look at those incoming tags, and determine, based on the Wrangling Guidelines, if the tag should be marked as canonical (the form of that concept that will show in the drop down menus and autocompletes), made a synonym of any existing canonical, or left unfilterable as a tag that is too unique to be useful for other users to filter with. As a general rule, any character who exists in canon, and any relationship that involves at

least one canonical character, will be canonized on the first usage. More general concepts (such as "Alternate Universe" or "Angst") will generally need to be used by multiple users before being canonized.

2. What is important about tag-wrangling?

Tag wrangling is what makes the AO3, in my opinion, the most useful platform on which to search for fanworks that there is. For most platforms, either you are limited to only using those tags that the platform has pre-seeded (which is inflexible, and means that the concepts you can tag for are, of necessity, limited), or there is no way to search for a unified concept at all. A system like, for example, tumblr, allows users to tag for anything they like, any way they like. This is great for avoiding the limiting factor of a pre-seeded tag set, but it means that if one set of users tag for a relationship you're interested in as "Tony/Steve", another set as "Steve/Tony" and a third set as "IronShield", you can only search for one concept at a time. (And I assure you: Marvel fandom has way more names for that relationship than just those three examples.)

Tag wrangling means that all tags are seen by a human who is generally familiar with the fandom, and who will know that "Pepperoni" in the relationships field is a synonym for Pepper Potts/Tony Stark, and who can thus tell the search index to bring up both sets of results when a user searches for one of them. This not only makes searching maximally useful, but it also enables us to preserve the rich diversity of fandom language and usages, and give users maximum freedom to express themselves in how the identify their works.

3. Tag-wrangling might be considered a monotonous task – why do you do it?

A combination of things. I consume a great many fanworks in my day to day life, but I don't really create that many. Tag wrangling is a way that I can feel as though I give something back to the community that has brought me so much joy. Additionally, I'm the type of boring individual who likes sorting and organizing things-- being able to spend an hour here or there working on wrangling is soothing. Also, you sometimes find the most delightful tags and/or new fanworks that way. Would I ever have thought to go looking for Darcy Lewis/Victor Von Doom fic if I hadn't seen the tag in my bins? Probably not!

4. Do you see yourself as a gatekeeper of your fandom, and if so, how?

Not really, no. One of the most important principles of tag wrangling is that we don't alter a user's tags. The beauty of the AO3's system is that everyone can tag for whatever they want, in exactly the format they want. As well, most large fandoms have multiple wranglers assigned to them, and that means that there has to be a general consensus on how to handle any given tag that is for some reason challenging, or requires a judgement call of some kind.

What I do see myself as providing is a chance to make too many years reading a lot of comic books useful. Marvel has a very, shall we say, dense, history. But if you think there aren't users out there who will tag for characters who appeared in one issue of Fantastic Four back in 1973, I want to assure you: you are wrong.

5. What do you think of AO3's tagging system? Do you think it could be improved?

I'm sure it could be, in a perfect universe with infinite resources, but honestly, I'm hard pressed to think of much I'd want to change in the world we live in. Our coders do amazing work, particularly given how few of them we have compared to the size of the Archive. Then too, most changes that could be proposed would have more to do with changes in policy than in systems. For example, there are an unfortunate number of tags floating about that can't be

wrangled because users entered them in the wrong field, but if you put "Tony Stark" in the Fandom field, we can't make it a synonym of Tony Stark the character tag. Changing the type of a given tag is changing what a user entered in a way that we don't do as a matter of policy, and it's a policy I have to agree with.

Participant E

1) How do you use tags on Etsy?

I use them with every listing and try have some which are broad - like "cross stitch" and "geeky " and some which are more specific - like my shop name and the names of the characters in the pattern - in hopes of capturing the attention of as many customers as possible.

2) Do you think buyers use Etsy tags to search, and do you think they find them useful?

I hope they use them. I know that when I'm searching for something on Etsy that I use them. I find them handy and hope others do too.

3) How do you feel about selling work that uses copyrighted characters?

Well, It doesn't keep me up at night. I've always considered our patterns as fanart - a way for us to celebrate the movies, shows, books, and comics that we love so much. We're working in a medium which certainly isn't traditional in the fanart community, but that doesn't make it any less relevant.

4) Do you think other fans disapprove of selling fanworks because of copyright laws, or don’t they care?

In my experience I don't think fans worry too much about the copyright laws. They're definitely more concerned that the fanworks are true to the characters and the franchise. If the fanwork is honest and a fair representation of the story/characters that's really what's important.

5) How do you market your work on Etsy? Do you use promotion tools? Do you ‘advertise’ on social media, etc.?

We occasionally use promoted listings on Etsy, but not often. Honestly I've really never noticed it making a difference in the traffic in our shop. We cater to a very specific kind of fan and we've been around long enough that most of them know to look for us. We use Instagram a lot to connect with our customers - and Facebook and Twitter too. It allows us to share what's new with them and also to see how their projects turn out. But it's very rare that we pay for boosted listings. On the rare occasion when we have I cant say it's really changed our sale stats in any noticeable way.

6) What do you think of the tagging system on Etsy? Do you think it could be improved?

It would be nice to have a few more tags - sometimes 13 just doesn't seem enough. 20 tags per listing would be wonderful!

7) Do you think there is a difference between selling fanart/fancrafts and selling fanfiction?

Not at all! Crafting and art is just another form of creative self-expression. For me picking up a needle is no different than picking up a pen.

8) Do you consider yourself a fan, and if so, how does that affect your production and selling activities?

Yes, I'm very much a fangirl. The original patterns that we started out with in the shop (like Doctor Who, Star Wars, and all the John Hughes movies) were made specifically because I'm a big fan of those franchises. Most of the comic book patterns in the shop are designed by my husband because he's the big comic reader in the family - and even when I try my hand at them, I usually defer to his expertise in the genre before the pattern is published in the shop. Knowing the characters well helps us to design a really great pattern, because we know the little details that make each person unique.

Being a fan certainly has influenced the business from both directions though - it's not just our own passions that dictate what we design, but those of our customers too - we've had so many requests for shows and movies and comics that we ourselves weren't initially familiar with, that we just had to get to know those franchises too. Without customers urging us to check out shows like Supernatural and Sherlock, we never would have designed those patterns and become fans of those shows too. I really should admit that I do draw the line at certain customer requests for completely personal reasons - there was a time there when I was getting asked daily for a Twilight pattern, but I just couldn't bring myself to design one!

Participant F

1) How do you use tags on Etsy?

I try to think about what is most culturally relevant to my product and market on what I think my buyers are looking for.

2) Do you think buyers use Etsy tags to search, and do you think they find them useful?

Yes! I think that if you're a fan of a certain fandom or product, then of course you're going to use that search term to find relevant listings.

3) How do you feel about selling work that uses copyrighted characters?

There's actually a little known loophole when it comes to using licensed fabrics. Since you've already paid the licensing fee by purchasing the fabric, the company has already received a licensing fee for that product if it's a pre-printed fabric. There has actually been a lawsuit over this and the licensor lost, as they'd already received revenue from the product. I don't recall the name of the case, though, but it caused a splash in our community.

4) Do you think other fans disapprove of selling fanworks because of copyright laws, or don't they care?

I don't think fans care, because the fans want to see more products of their fandom out there. And licensing is hard to come by and so expensive that your average creator and crafters on Etsy don't have the ability to license 100,000 pieces from the intellectual property. Licenses only work when mass-producing, and don't work as well for small runs or custom creations.

5) How do you market your work on Etsy? Do you use promotion tools? Do you 'advertise' on social media, etc.?

I mostly rely on social media. I don't ever use any paid advertising because I haven't noticed that paying for advertisements has made a significant difference.

6) What do you think of the tagging system on Etsy? Do you think it could be improved?

I don't think it's bad. I've never noticed anything particularly cumbersome about it.

7) Do you think there is a difference between selling fanart/fancrafts and selling fanfiction?

Well, selling a product is different than selling something digital. But only in the sense that one is tangible and sent to you vs. an emailed digital product. But the art is the same. It's still an inspired work from a fandom or property that the artist doesn't own. Their interpretation is their intellectual property though, in my opinion.

8) Do you consider yourself a fan, and if so, how does that affect your production and selling activities?

I feel like being a fan of the properties that I'm making inspired pieces by helps me to know what another fan would want to buy. It provides more passion and inspiration of the works if I'm a part of the fandoms that I'm pulling from.

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INDEX

1

100, The, 226

A

"A Worker's Inquiry 2.0", 107-109
acafans, xii, 65, 68, 125-126, 172, 181
Ackoff's knowledge pyramid, 303
Adorno, Theodor, 60-61, 64
affirmational fanworks. *See* fanworks, encyclopaedic
amateurs, 3, 79, 93, 104-105, 120, 141, 164, 283, 321, 331
Amazon, 20, 25, 205, 265, 276, 309, 368
anime, xii, 10, 72, 273, 296
API's (Application Programming Interfaces), 81, 221
APMO Cut-Off Rate, 199, 202
Archive of Our Own (AO3), 77, 81, 83, 84, 156, 165, 216, 218, 306, 311
  tagging on, 227-228, 235-238, 252-259, 273-276, 294
archontic literature, 57, 115, 291, 321-322
archontic production. *See* archontic literature
Assassin's Creed, 314
Austen, Jane, 46, 56
Avengers, 81, 243, 253, 264, 286

B

Baudrillard, Jean, 63-64
Beauty and the Beast (TV series), 66
Ben Hur, 55
Benjamin, Walter, 62-63, 64
beta-reading, xii, 22, 72, 77, 91, 311, 315
Bibsonomy, 166
Bieber, Justin, 21
big data
  and privacy, 177
Blakes 7, 57, 66, 68

C

canon, xii, xiii, 47, 75, 114, 287-289, 291, 302, 304
case studies, 141, 154-155
  in fan studies, 154
  in LIS, 154
  limitations of, 156, 220-221
  types of, 155
Christie, Agatha, 123
CiteULike, 163
City of Heroes, 25, 44, 87, 88
collective intelligence, 6, 71
communities
  definition of, 37
  discourse, 43, 48, 116
  interpretive, 51, 116
  of fantasy, 41, 43, 51
  of interest, 14, 41, 51
  of play, 15, 51, 116, 272, 285
  of practice, 14-15
  of relationship, 41, 51
  of transaction, 41, 50, 52, 116, 120, 285
  online, 37, 39-43, 116
  online vs virtual, 42-43
constructionism. *See* interpretivism
conventions (fandom), xii, 4, 6, 7, 28, 55, 56, 58, 77, 105, 296, 312
convergence culture, 7, 21-22, 50, 72
copyright, 17-19, 77, 174, 279-280, 298-299, 308-310, 318, 320
cosplay, xii, 10, 15, 71, 193, 209, 243, 288, 289, 296, 301
craigslist, 41
Creative Commons, 299
crowdfunding, 1, 22, 50, 385
crowdsourcing, 1, 22, 25, 77, 81, 86, 153, 164-165, 310, 323
cultural economy of fan production, 29, 67, 73, 318
  enunciative, 29, 33, 67, 301
  semiotic, 29, 67, 301
  textual, 30, 67, 301
cultural neo-dualism, 134, 165
curated folksonomy, 49, 83-86, 91, 115, 164, 216, 235, 240, 275, 280, 282, 307, 331

D

data science
  relationship with LIS, 134-135
  tag analysis in, 165
Dead or Alive, 75, 286
Del.icio.us. *See* Delicious
Delicious, 161, 163
Delphi (research method), 147-154, 180
  Argument, 150
  Critical, 150, 153
  disadvantages of, 152-154
  Disaggregative Policy, 149
  history of, 148-151
  Imen-, 149
  measuring consensus in, 198-199
  panel recruitment, 181-183, 185-186
  Policy, 149
  process of, 191-194
  Serious Leisure, 3, 148, 153, 182, 283, 307, 328, 331
  Slow, 150
  text analysis in, 188
democratic indexing, 48-49, 83-84, 164

deviantART, 1, 59, 294, 312, 324
DIY culture, 20, 118, 309
DIY publishing, 77
Doctor Who, 279, 296
Dreamcast, 326
dressing (information science), 99-101, 286-287, 292, 306

E

Easter eggs, xii, 206, 213, 214, 313
eBay, 41, 279
Ecology of online Sims communities (model), 106-107
education, 22-24, 72-73, 315-316
Elfwood, 1, 312
emojis/emoticons, 167, 169, 225
enthusiasts, 3, 14, 16, 30-31, 86, 93, 104, 109, 117, 283, 326, 328
ethics (research), 170-178
ethnography, 66, 68, 124, 126-127
  auto-, 126
  in fan studies, 70-71
Etsy, 50, 156, 216, 218-219, 238, 281, 312
  tagging on, 229, 259-267, 276-280, 294
EtsyRank, 222, 239
Everyday Life Information Seeking (ELIS), iii, 24, 87, 97-99

F

Facebook, 25, 59, 81, 226
fair use, 17, 73, 308
fan (word)
  definition of, 54
fan archives, 76, 302-303, 322-327
fan communities, 49-52, 293
fan information behaviour, 3, 8, 35, 76, 92, 207, 209-211, 284-306, 320
  in gaming, 44, 76, 87-89
  model of, 4, 112-114, 288-291, 307, 318-319
fan labour, 74, 107, 115, 127
fan studies, 10, 30, 53, 54, 58, 75, 77, 96, 124, 226
  fan information behaviour in, 53, 76-77
  history of, 60-75
  methodological issues in, 125-128
  methodology in, 123-128
  research ethics in, 172-175
fanart, xii, 6, 224, 279, 286, 296
  and copyright, 17
fandom, xii
  activism in, 166, 206, 213, 214, 285, 316-318, 328, 329
  charitable support in, 209, 213, 313, 316
  collaboration in, 311
  conflict in, 56, 123, 208, 317
  cult media, xii, 10, 36, 123
  gender in, 68-69, 71-72, 292
  hierarchy in, 16, 305
  historicization of, 53-55
  impact on LIS, 14, 24, 306, 321, 329
  privacy in, 172-175, 299-300
  transcultural, 10, 89-90, 156
fandom statistics. *See* fanstats
fanfic. *See* fanfiction
fanfiction, xii, 57, 287, 296, 305
  and copyright, 17
  and English language learning, 23, 72, 77
  classification of, 80, 91, 93
fanfiction genres, 47-48, 243
  darkfic, 46, 47
  femslash, xiii
  first-time, 46
  fluff, 293
  hurt/comfort, 46, 293
  meta, xiii, 48, 73, 124, 188, 252, 300, 305
  slash, xiii, 46, 68, 172, 243, 293
  wingfic, 295
Fanfiction.net, 1, 18, 19, 59, 72, 294, 311
fanfims, 310
fanon, xii, 288, 289, 302, 304
fans
  and the internet, 4, 28-29, 32-33, 58, 70-72, 307
  as collectors, 210, 327
  as domain experts, 181
  as pros, 19, 75, 286, 302, 314
  as sellers, 73, 208, 211-212, 266-267, 277-280, 309-310, 318
  casual, 32, 34
  dedicated, 32, 34, 305
  definition of, 10, 28-36
  online/offline behaviour, 117, 200, 209, 211, 287, 297, 318
  pathologisation of, 28, 65
  relationship with media industry, 7, 20, 74, 209-210, 286, 312-315, 318
  relationships between, 70, 209, 318
Fansplaining (podcast), 312
fanstats, 300
fantagging, xii, 93, 165, 210-211, 216, 295
  as identity, 251
  taxonomy of, 234, 243
fanvids. *See* vids
fanworks, xii, 6, 66, 292, 302
  and copyright, 17-19
  authenticity, 304-306
  encyclopaedic, 115, 287, 292, 318
  organisation of, 92, 273, 293, 307
  preservation of, 22, 77, 80, 302-303, 306, 321
  transformative, 210, 292, 308, 318
fanzines, xii, 4, 19, 56, 66, 70, 79, 296
fic. *See* fanfiction
Fifty Shades of Grey
  publication of, 19-20, 312
filk songs, xii, 6, 57, 66
Firefly, 279, 317
Fiske, John, 59, 67
Flickr, 25, 81, 84, 107, 157, 161, 162, 164, 167, 250, 271
folksonomies, 83, 157
Fruchterman-Reingold (algorithm), 244, 253, 260

G

Galaxy Zoo, 25, 85
Game of Thrones, 82, 193
gatekeepers (information), 16, 44, 88, 102, 115, 157, 160, 206, 207, 208, 210, 212, 213, 214, 216, 218, 240, 255, 274, 281, 282, 288, 296, 297, 299, 315, 318
gemeinschaft, 37-39, 52
genre, 43-49, 52, 115, 273
  literary, 43, 293
  rhetorical, 43, 293
Gephi, 222, 232, 237
gesellschaft, 38-39, 52
gifs, xiii, 317
gift economy, 50, 68, 200, 211, 267, 278, 281, 282
  hybridisation of, 278, 309
GLAM sector, 25, 164, 323
Glee, 154
Google, 18, 29, 71, 82, 175, 237, 271, 295
Grand Theft Auto, 123

H

Hannibal, 210, 313, 314
Hannigram (ship), 313
Harry Potter, 21, 48, 230, 243, 253, 273
headcanons, xiii, 301, 304, 315
Hektor's information activities model, 99-101
hobbyists, 3, 14, 16, 26, 93, 104-105, 117, 283, 285, 328
hyperlink analysis. *See* link analysis

I

immersive documents, 325, 329
information behaviour, 11-12, 25
  and serious leisure, 24
  and tag analysis, 166-168
  and user studies, 13, 25, 94, 129
  definition of, 11-12
  intrinsically-motivated, 116-117
  models of, 11, 94-104, 127
  of fans. *See* fan information behaviour
  pleasurable aspects of, 15, 86, 116, 324
information communication chain, 12-13, 87, 99, 103, 111, 210, 291, 292, 293, 302, 303, 324, 328
information domains, 90-91, 109
Information grounds (model of information behaviour), 101
Information Journey (model of information behaviour), 101-103
information seeking, 11, 24, 83, 88, 103, 110, 167, 297, 305
Information-seeking and communication model (ISCM), 103-104
Instagram, 81, 167
intellectual property, 280, 285, 298, 309, 320
Internet Archive, 175
interpretivism, 121-122, 131
Iron Sky
  legal dispute, 75
iTunes, 18

J

Jenkins, Henry, 5, 58, 65

K

kickstarters, 2, 22, 285
Kindle Worlds, 20, 106, 312
kink (fandom), xiii, 273
knowledge capital, 104, 190, 257, 287, 297, 403, 411

L

Library and information science (LIS), 9, 27, 45, 91, 93, 95, 104, 110, 151, 153, 218, 285, 321, 322, 323, 328, 329, 331
  Delphi method in, 150-151
  fan information behaviour in, 53, 78-90, 92
  genre in, 48-49
  impact on fandom, 326-327
  methodology in, 122
  relationship with data science, 134-135
  research ethics in, 171-172
  social network analysis in, 159-161
  tag analysis in, 161-166
LibraryThing, 276
link analysis, 158
LIS. *See* Library and information science
Listserv, 5, 58
literature reviews, 144
LiveJournal, 1, 51, 76, 77, 226, 306
Lost, 55
Lulu.com, 20, 311, 312
lurkers, 200, 206, 212, 214

M

Maker Movement, 280
Man From U.N.C.L.E., The, 55
manga, xiii, 10, 296, 301, 316
manips, xiii, 34
Marvel (company), 286
Marvel Universe, xiii, 169, 219, 253, 255, 264
Marx, Karl, 107
mashups, 18, 81
Mass Effect, 165, 288, 314
Master of the Universe. *See Twilight* saga
Matrix, The, 7
media franchise, xii
media industry, 20-22, 107, 114, 118, 209-210, 312-315
mentorship, 23, 66, 70, 71, 72, 77, 91, 120, 213, 290, 315-316, 320, 327
metadata, 157, 161, 293, 300
mixed methods, 122, 128-130, 147
  in LIS, 129
  research design in, 136-140

sampling in, 182-183
modding, xiii, 23, 73, 296, 315
MTV, 57
MySpace, 107

N

NodeXL, 222, 232-233
NVivo, 146, 186-187, 188, 200, 242

O

oekaki, xiii, 315
Once Upon a Time, 226
One Direction, 226, 312
ONElist, 76
online interviews, 168
Oracle v. Google (legal case), 308

P

Pajek, 222, 237
participatory culture, 33, 41, 52, 57, 66, 72, 74, 96, 114, 119, 120, 274
Patreon, 50
peer-learning, 23, 73, 77, 120, 226, 315, 316, 320
personal information management (PIM), 8, 298
Pinterest, 25, 81, 216, 324
podfic, xiii, 311, 312
positivism, 121, 125
postpositivism, 130-134
pragmatism, 130-134
Pride & Prejudice, 288
produsage, 1, 72, 91, 107, 114, 118, 274, 318
Professionals, The, 68
profic, xiii
prompt (fandom), xiii
publishing, 19-20, 118, 288, 310-312
online, 310-311
purposive sampling, 141, 169, 182-183
Python (programming language), 221, 230-231, 301

Q

qualitative methods, 121-122, 130
quantitative methods, 121-122, 130

R

reclists, xiii, 77, 210, 296
RedBubble, 50, 312
remediation, xiii, 18, 34, 106, 118
remix culture, 18
Rice, Anne, 18
Rogue
(tag), 273
Rogue (X-Men), 271
Rogue and Gambit. *See* Romy
roleplaying, 51
Romy (ship), 216, 262, 296
(tag), 230, 236, 241, 244
Rowling, J. K., 18

S

science fiction, 55
Second Life, 15, 41, 73
self-publishing, 20, 296
semi-structured interviews, 141, 168-170, 239-240
Serious Leisure Perspective, 3, 14, 24, 86, 93, 104-105, 110
Sherlock. *See* Sherlock Holmes
Sherlock Holmes, 55, 56, 123, 219, 227, 230, 277
ship (fandom), xiii, 47, 258, 273, 293
Sims, The, 2, 8, 73, 76, 106, 299, 302
Skype, 169, 311, 323
social capital, 104
social media, 74, 81
analytics, 157
data analysis, 156, 223, 242
network analysis, 223
social network analysis, 157-159, 244
SocSciBot, 178, 222, 230, 235, 236, 237
source text (fandom), 5, 7, 19, 34, 51, 57, 66, 75, 101, 106, 114, 120, 286, 288, 291, 292, 293, 301, 305, 315, 318
spoilers, 297
Star Trek, xii, 21, 55, 56, 57, 65, 66, 68, 69, 71, 75, 79, 123, 124, 302, 308, 317
Star Wars, xii, 74, 123, 288, 314
Starsky and Hutch, 68
Supernatural, 219, 277, 298
Swan Queen (ship), 16

T

tag analysis, 3, 141, 155, 156-168, 216, 230, 283, 301, 308, 328, 329, 331
tag wranglers, 83, 169, 241, 274
tag wrangling, xiii, 84, 216, 228, 235, 236, 252, 274, 294
tagging, 86, 290
as crediting, 270, 299
as play, 271
automanual system, 223, 227, 229
communication and dialogue via, 250, 252, 270
co-occurrence, 162
descriptive, 251, 252, 260, 268
hybrid system, 223
self-tagging system, 223, 227, 229
types, 217
unreliability of, 294
TeeFury, 50, 308
Teen Wolf, 210, 313
textual poaching, 5, 8, 57, 65
Transcribe Bentham, 25
transmedia, 7, 76
triangulation, 135-136, 143
Tumblr, 59, 156, 167, 185, 209, 216, 218
research on, 225
tagging on, 211, 223-227, 230-234, 244-252, 269-273, 294

Twilight saga, 19
Twitter, 25, 51, 59, 77, 80, 81, 125, 154, 157, 161, 162, 167, 185, 220, 222, 227, 478
  tagging on, 225

U

Uru, 15
Usenet, 5, 42, 58, 76
user-generated content, 74, 82, 107, 140, 190, 313

V

vids, xiii, 6, 29, 32, 58, 66, 73, 296, 310, 311, 312
volunteers, 3, 14, 83, 85, 86, 104, 105, 216, 235, 283, 302, 303, 322, 328

W

Walking Dead, The, 32
warrant (information science), 84
Wattpad, 311
Web 2.0, 7, 21, 25, 33, 52, 59, 63, 74, 81, 83, 107, 118, 271, 311, 312, 314, 323
web crawling, 175-178
  ethics in, 175-178
Wikipedia, 41, 82, 85
wikis, 1, 8, 22, 32, 34, 103, 206, 207, 210, 212, 214, 287, 290, 292, 296
Wilson's model of information behaviour, 95-97
World Archives Project, 25
World of Warcraft, 88-89, 314
Wowhead, 88

X

Xena – Warrior Princess, 75
X-Files, 154
X-Men, 123, 219, 220, 231, 288

Y

YouTube, 18, 25, 29, 107, 312, 315, 324

Z

zines. *See* fanzines