VIII. Awards
  a. Pilgrim Award winners and publications: All Pilgrim award winners receive lifetime membership and that includes the journals, so the question arises, now that there are two tiers, should they get the subscriptions in print? Though the e-versions would be the easiest, it seems rather strange to give someone lifetime membership and then restrict it. After some discussion, we tabled the issue until we see what the Pilgrims prefer and if we are going to do print-on-demand with the *Review*.
  b. Redesign of some of the SFRA Awards? Although we have enough for the near future, there is some concern about the design of the Pilgrim and Pioneer awards. Because we no longer have the original artwork, the last engraving batch showed significant degradation of the design, degradation that will continue as more copies are made. After looking at the fairly geometric designs, the EC decided we should be able to find an artist to copy them for us so that fresh artwork instead of copies of copies could be used.
      i. Mary Kay Bray award: well, we all laughed when we saw it and the Student Essay award was even funnier. Since we are having the artist create 3 designs for the new SFRA logo, we thought that we might possibly be able to use the other 2 to redesign these awards. Therefore, we tabled the redesign issue until we see the commissioned designs.
IX. Other Old Business: None
X.   Any new Business
  a. Beverly Friend asked if SFRA would help with funds to host a soirée for the academic track of WorldCon. Because SFRA would be listed as a sponsor but mostly because of Beverly's contributions to the organization, funds were granted
XI. At about 5:54 pm Ritch call for adjournment, and we all hardily seconded the motion. ◼

Video Game Studies 101

Lars Schmeink

I AM A GAMER. This is not part of a twelve-step program confession but a generational fact. And I am not alone. My generation, that has been so snidely labeled Generation X, is the first to have grown-up into gaming culture, completely enveloped by it. I was not part of the college crowd when *Spacewar!* and its variants[1] were first installed at universities; I was too young for that. I was a small kid when my older brother brought home the very first Atari *Pong* gaming console,[2] and those two white lines reflecting a white dot going back and forth on the TV screen enraptured me completely. Because of this, I have grown up with games from early childhood on and I have become a gamer. There is no time in my life that I have not been playing video games. So, video game studies as a field of academic inquiry comes naturally to me. I know the immense capacity for stories, the challenges (physical, psychological, and emotional) of gameplay, the social implications of gaming, and of course I know all the wonderful moments when video games award you for accomplishing that task, finishing that quest, finding that awesome item or just getting rid of that pesky enemy. But many of you might not.

So I will start with a couple of facts that might surprise you. US consumers have made video games the biggest player in the entertainment industry: entertainment software accounted for $15.9 billion in sales in 2010 while the music industry claimed $6.8 billion and the motion picture industry claimed $10.6 billion.[3] Video games can be found in 72% of American households—and it is not just the teenage boys that play them. Instead, the average gamer is by now 37 years old and 42% of all gamers are female. And these figures are not just a reflection of a generation that has grown up with games either, for 29% of Americans over 50 play games on a regular basis as well.[4] Video gaming is becoming ubiquitous in Western cultures and our students have probably been steeped in gaming for all their lives. As scholars of culture, studying games and their impact on society might thus be the logical and necessary next step for us on the road to understanding the 21st century. In this essay I would like to provide a short overview of the road so far.

History

As with many a field of academic study, it is hard to pinpoint a historic origin for video game studies. There are of course precursors to the field, as video game studies can be understood and analyzed within the more general frame of game studies, which Frans Mäyrä points out is simply, "a multidisciplinary field of study and learning with g*ames and related phenomena as its subject matter*" (6, italics in original). As such, texts from

disciplines such as philosophy, ethnography, cultural history, military training and simulation, education and sociology might address aspects of game studies before such a field can be discerned. The first key text to propose that human development–and therefore much of culture–is based in "play," thus providing the first important text of game studies, is Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens* (1938). Another major contribution to the field was then published in 1958 by French sociologist Roger Caillois, who differentiated play into two types of activity: a more structured 'game' according to explicit rules ("ludus") and a free, associative form of 'play" ("paidea"; cf. Frasca). Game studies have thus contributed strongly to the sociological and cultural historical aspects of video game studies.

The earliest writings on video games, though, have focused on technical aspects, discussing programming, design and engineering of games for electronic devices (cf. Wolf and Perron, "Introduction" 3ff.) while debating the scope of the field (i.e., the in- or exclusivity of terms such as 'electronic games,' 'video games' and 'computer games'). Starting from as early as 1970 and in parallel with the development of the games themselves, a critical reflection on gaming's economical aspects, as well as the conception of guide books (for gamers, programmers, etc.), started-both supported by a growing gaming industry and fan base. However, since this kind of (academic) writing on video games is not central to our purposes (even though it still holds a major proportion of the field today), I will neglect it for the rest of this article. Similarly, I will not concentrate on aspects of the sociology or psychology of gaming, which started to become an interest of the field from the 1980s onward and are today considered vital parts of video game studies–even accounting for the most prominent and publicly scandalous aspect of video games: the killer game and its societal consequences.

For the purpose of science fiction studies, the most relevant aspects of gaming rather lie in their function as cultural texts, as stories presented in a specific medium and with meaning structures that can be decoded via the tools of text and media studies. Historically speaking, the Humanities interest in video games as artifacts has been present only for twenty years. Many of these studies approach video games via theories borrowed from other disciplines such as theatre and performance (cf. Laurel), film (as proposed by the Le Diberder brothers, cf. Wolf and Perron, "Introduction" 8) and textual narratology (cf. Ryan), all of which are valid in certain respects but lacking in others. It seems obvious that video games share the performance aspect of drama in that parts of them need to be acted out by the player. Similar to film, the video game relies heavily on visuals and has lots of scripted storytelling, so much so as to even prompt the medial crossbreed of the interactive film (such as Sony Entertainment's *Heavy Rain*). Lastly, narratological approaches have been useful to identify concepts such as focalization, narrator position and diegetic levels within the video game.

Concepts

One of the key arguments against a purely textual approach (no matter which text form is chosen, i.e. film, prose, drama) is that it neglects the specific medium of the game and does not incorporate the involvement of the player in constructing textual meaning. In 1997, Espen Aarseth in his seminal study *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature*, therefore proposed to conceptualize video games as a non-linear textual form that needs non-trivial work (not just turning the page) from the user/reader in order to physically construct the "semiotic sequence" (1) of the text. As Aarseth puts it, the game is not metaphorically but logically best represented as a labyrinth of forking paths, which needs to be navigated by the user via non-trivial work:

> This may be hard to understand for the traditional literary critic who cannot perceive the difference between metaphorical structure and logical structure, but it is essential. The cybertext reader *is* a player, a gambler; the cybertext *is* a game-world or world-game; it *is* possible to explore, get lost, and discover secret paths in these texts, not metaphorically, but through the topological structures of the textual machinery. (4, emphasis in original)

Aarseth thus stresses the importance of a conceptual separation of a game and a narrative, arguing for a video game studies approach that recognizes similarities as well as differences. Similarly, Gonzalo Frasca has pointed out the problem that games have been approached and structurally analyzed mainly from a narratological perspective (be it via film or text), ignoring the option to analyze them as games. In an attempt to provide a unified terminology to study games, he argued for the necessity to establish of a "ludology," a discipline that studies games irrespective of their medium, just as narratology studies narrative irrespective of its medium (cf. "Ludology," n.pag.), and which will be able to provide a formal framework for all gaming aspects of video games, complementing the narratological as-

pects.

Narratological studies provide a system of formal categories for describing games, for example according to their point of view (referring to how the player perceives himself as the actor of the game) and point of action (referring to how the game interface allows for manipulation of the game world; cf. Neitzel) or according to the games' appropriation of scripted and unscripted events to advance the narration (cf. Thon). Frasca's ludological approach on the other hand goes beyond the formal description of games as a narrated representation of events, instead focusing on the concept of simulation: video games do not narrate (i.e. represent) the events but rather simulate (i.e. model the behavior of) them ("Simulation versus Narrative" 222f.). To simulate, Frasca says, "is to model a (source) system through a different system which maintains (for somebody) some of the behaviors of the original system" (ibid. 223). For video games, this means that the game system models some aspects of the behavior of another system (such as driving a car, playing football or shooting a gun) and the player can actively modify this system to experience a different outcome. What is key to this concept is that for the player the game is not just the output we see on the screen but the experience of choice, interaction and movement in the simulated system. This is not so for those who are not actively playing: "for an external observer, the outcome of simulation is a narration" (Frasca, "Simulation 101" 2) and a game might look and feel like a film–thus prompting the conflation of both media. Where in a film the viewer is damned to live through whatever action happens on screen, in a game the player can actively decide to do otherwise, at least to a degree that the rules of the simulation allow. These rules, governed by the programming that a "simauthor" (Frasca, "Simulation versus Narration," 227) provides the game with, determine the simulated system's behavior and can be analyzed according to their ideological standpoint. The player's decisions, their range, and also their outcome are determined by the system's behavior, and thus by the simauthor's ideological stance that allows for certain behaviors or determines the probability of a desired outcome. This approach then can, for example, lead to interesting cross-analysis with political or psychoanalytical readings of video games (a Marxist approach to *SimCity*; a feminist reading of *Tomb Raider*; the Freudian sublime in *Doom*, etc.).

But since games are both ludus and narration, the latter is considered a relevant factor in their analy-

sis. The key concept of medium specificity in a video game narration then is its difference to other media. Namely, the question is how deeply the player/viewer feels involved in the events that are narrated/simulated. Marie-Laure Ryan proposes two categories that define this relation in any text and that are central to conceptualizing video games: immersion and interactivity. For Ryan, "immersion is the experience through which a fictional world acquires the presence of an autonomous, language-independent reality populated with live human beings" (14). In effect, then, the more immersive a text is, the more we feel to be part of its world, the more we identify with our character (or avatar, as the game terminology goes) and the more we 'forget' that we are reading a book, watching a movie or playing a game. Interactivity on the other hand refers to the amount of participation in and the level of awareness of the work needed "in the production of meaning" (16). In reading a novel this refers to the intellectual work of world-construction, but in a game it can be understood as performance, "actually participating in the physical production of the text" (17) for example by guiding the avatar with the mouse, clicking buttons or even swinging the remote (as with the Wii controller interface).

Both concepts are not exclusive to video game worlds but can be found in literary texts as well. The problem here arises that literary texts can provide only either immersion or interactivity but not both at the same time, as interactivity (or self-reflexivity in the case of literary texts, i.e. when the text reminds us that we are actively reading and constructing meaning from language-signs) disrupts the immersion by reminding us of our "external perspective on the worlds of the textual universe" (20). In virtual realities such as video games, on the other hand, "we act within a world and experience it from the inside," through the "projection of a virtual body" (20f.) and are thus able to reconcile immersion and interactivity by acting as if we were the avatar. The only thing that stands in the way of complete immersive interactivity is the interface that still requires us to click a button instead of actually moving, but game interface development is progressing in this regard so that at some point fully realized virtual worlds might seem possible. As William Gibson has shown us so phenomenally well when he described cyberspace in *Neuromancer* (1984): science fiction can influence the mundane world; it just takes time.

Science Fiction Gaming

And there we are, finally, at the question of how video

games and science fiction come together. There is the obvious question of how games as a technology, as a medium and a social arena, participate in 'classic' science fiction media. Many examples can be found since the inception of video games in the 1970s. In particular, visual science fictions have tried to explore virtual gaming worlds, either as a reflection of and training ground for real life challenges (*WarGames* [1983], *Starfight* [1984], *Stargate Universe* [2009-]), as an alternative or parallel world to be explored (*Tron* [1981], T*ron: Legacy* [2010], *Caprica* [2010]) or as an allegory for political or personal conflicts (*Avalon* [2001], *eXistenZ* [1999], *Gamer* [2009]). Literary depictions of gaming have been fewer but exist in cyberpunk (via some depictions of virtual realities) as well as contemporary (science fiction) literature such as Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003) or Cory Doctorow's *Little Brother* (2008) and *For the Win* (2010). Add to that the growing amount of video game adaptations that rework gaming experiences into cinematic narratives–sometimes with more success (*Final Fantasy – The Spirit Within* [2001], *Resident Evil* [2002]) sometimes with less success (*Wing Commander* [1999], *Doom* [2005])–and you have a fairly interesting body of texts in 'classic' media that deal with gaming and science fiction. All of that can be dealt with outside video game studies and with classic literary or media studies approaches.[5]

If you remember the name of the first video game from the beginning of this article, though, it should become clear that video games themselves have always been inspired by science fiction and provide a rich field for SF Media Studies. Already with *Spacewar!*, we can see the thematic orientation that has provided the game with its tropes: two spaceships fight each other while constantly trying to escape the gravitation of a star in the middle of the screen. From there on out, science fiction and video games were a match made in virtual heaven and many a game classic cannot be fully grasped without science fiction in mind: *Space Invaders* (1978)–inspired by H.G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds* (1898)–as well as the science-fiction themed *Asteroids* (1979), future-war themed *Missile Command* (1980) and *Defender* (1980), and of course the video game adaptation of the film *Tron* (1982). For the purposes of a "101," though, I would like to concentrate on more contemporary examples and provide an outlook as to where science fiction studies and video game studies intersect most prominently. I will thus present some recent games and shortly exemplify their contribution to their respective genres[6] as well as their science fictional aspects.

Mass Effect (BioWare, Electronic Arts, CDN/US 2007) is the first installment of an action game series (supposed to be a trilogy by 2012) that can be understood within the genre of space opera. Set in 2183 on a space ship and several planets throughout the 'Citadel'-ruled galaxy, the scope of the story is epic: the hero, Commander Shepard, is training to become special-ops (a 'Spectre'), and is sent out to retrieve an item called the 'Artifact' when the planet is overrun by the 'Geth.' Led by the rogue 'Spectre' Saren, the 'Geth' capture the 'Artifact' and try to use it in order to awaken a dark and evil race of machine life forms called 'The Reapers.' Shepard has thus to reveal the betrayal of Saren, stop the awakening of the Reapers, gather allies in the coming war and in the process uncover the machinations of intergalactic politics in order to save the galaxy. The game prominently features a space opera, which as described by Brian Stableford in the *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* is "[a] colourful action-adventure stor[y] of interplanetary or interstellar conflict," with prominent themes of space travel and intergalactic politics, a "calculatedly romantic element" for the plot (Shepard can 'flirt' with basically any of his/her crew mates), and an epic story arc on a content level. Furthermore, the game mechanics reflect aspects of the space opera as well in that the game combines action-adventure with roleplaying game (RPG) elements, allowing for character development and decision points. The game is highly immersive in the sense that RPGs allow individual choices on character creation (down to sex, phenotype, skill set and abilities) and later development during the game. This enables players to stronger identify with Shepard, who will be the protagonist of the whole series, therefore binding affective response to him/her. At the same time singling out an individual as a larger than life hero is another typical element of the space opera. In addition, the game also stresses both immersion and interactivity by leaving crucial plot decisions up to the player, thus allowing for several different paths that the story could take. The end of the first part of the trilogy is for example determined by giving players the choice whether to back a certain political system or to overthrow it, resulting in a completely different starting position for the second part of the trilogy. This adds to the epic, political scope of the story and the character's (i.e. the player's) individual position in the events, again emphasizing space opera genre conventions, a highly developed world-building of the game, and an identification with the character–as his/her path in the game is

decided mainly by the player, not by a script.

Similarly, *BioShock* (2k Boston, 2k Games, US 2007)[7] most effectively uses player agency and moral decision points to emphasize genre aspects of two other science fiction genres: those of utopia and the alternate history. The first-person shooter takes places in an alternate 1960, when the plane of protagonist Jack crashes on a small island in the middle of the Atlantic and he finds the entrance to the underwater city Rapture, an Objectivist utopia. Rapture was built by Objectivists[8] in this alternate history in order to counter the Cold War exploitation of science and business for ideological purposes. But at the time of Jack's discovery, Rapture's utopian ideal had already turned into a dystopian nightmare due to internal power struggles finally leading to civil war. Jack finds himself trapped under the sea with hordes of genetically altered 'Splicers,' a post-human breed reminiscent of zombies and mutants, who try to kill him continuously, thus prompting the shooter aspect of the game. During his heroic journey to re-ascend he finds helpers, has to defeat adversaries, is tested over and over again, and finally faces the antagonist, all in a very monomythical quest, before being able to return to his own world above the sea. During his journey he uncovers, via audio cues on tape and other clues throughout Rapture, the history of the city's origin, rise to utopian ideal, and subsequent fall to dystopian ruin.

Similar to utopian literature, both in its eutopian and dystopian form, *BioShock* presents the player with a world that describes "a non-existent society described in considerable detail," locating it recognizably "in time and space" (9), as Lyman Tower Sargent describes literary utopias. As in the utopian tradition, Jack the outsider needs an explanation in order to grasp Rapture's "dream of a better life" (Sargent 10), which is given to him via his guide Atlas, as well as through information gleaned from (audio) documents and from commentaries by other citizens of Rapture. But overlaying this utopian ideal of the founding of Rapture in the past also lies the game's present, in which it turns out that Jack is not a utopian outsider but an integral part of its downfall, and can either participate in rectifying the dystopian situation or promoting it into the rest of the world. Following the principle of the alternate history, the game in its simultaneous set-up of exploring both utopian past and dystopian present opens up speculation on "the nature of time and linearity […] and the role of individuals in the history-making process" (Hellekson 254) that goes beyond literary possibilities.

More so than in literary or cinematic works, the game perspective of the first-person shooter (that of no visible avatar but the weapon 'the player' carries) allows for the "implied observer of narrative event–an 'absent one'" of film to become a "'present one,' standing in for the player" (Rehak 121) embodying and representing the authorial agency of the player herself. The game therefore allows the player to experience alternate history, the decisions that partake in the "history-making process," from the perspective of the active agent, fully immersing via the first-person perspective that cinema does not allow. *BioShock* enables players to participate in the utopian/dystopian world, at the same time denying their "own material existence" and feeling the seductive generation of "new perspectives," of the forked paths of history that may lead to either solution. They become "effectively a cyborg consciousness" (Rehak 113) identifying with the game's character, resulting in an ultimate mix of immersion and interactivity: you, as player, decide the outcome of our future, not the author of the utopian/dystopian work you read/watch (cf. Schmeink).

Dead Space (Visceral Games, Electronic Arts, US 2008)[9] is a third-person action game that falls into the video game category called survival horror, referring to games in which "the player leads an individual character through an uncanny narrative and hostile environment where the odds are weighed decidedly against the avatar" (Hand 117) and whose fantastic aspects are usually more closely associated with horror than with science fiction. But as Richard J. Hand argues:

> [S]urvival horror can take place as easily in a futuristic setting as in a fictional past. It may be the setting, the mood or the violence in a game that make it horror. It may be the structuring of narrative, characterization, or the experience of gameplay that make it survival horror. (119)

The game thus straddles both genres, enhancing the horror elements with a science fiction backdrop, which enables it to reimagine horror categories such as the sublime or the abject in order to provoke even stronger emotions of shock or anxiety in the player.

Dead Space is set in the year 2508 onboard the gigantic mining ship 'USG Ishimura,' a vessel used to harvest resources by ripping apart whole planets and mining the broken pieces for precious materials. On one such mining trip, the Ishimura stops broadcasting and protagonist Isaac Clarke (yes, he is named after famous sf writers), an engineer, is sent to investigate the ship and repair it, if necessary. Unfortunately his own ship

crashes and his crew soon gets slaughtered, leaving the player stranded on the Ishimura and desperately looking for an escape and trying to survive. The player soon discovers what led to the demise of the crew onboard: an alien virus has first killed and then reanimated the deceased crew by mutating them into 'Necromorphs.' In the guise of Clarke, only equipped with engineering tools, the player now has to survive by finding ammunition and better weapons, repairing the ship and mostly by trying to evade confrontations with the Necromorphs as fights with them are threateningly challenging at best, quick and deadly at worst.

Horror is generally defined by the affect it creates in its 'reader,' thus any horror game's main goal is to transport emotions of fear, repulsion and despair. Noel Carroll has famously shown in his book *The Philosophy of Horror* that in what he terms "art horror" (the horror elicited by artworks, not by real events) these emotions are experienced paradoxically, for at the same time the artwork produces pleasure in the recipient. In video games, Aki Järvinen argues, the player is emotionally rewarded with different 'pleasures' derived from several core emotions, all of which the game usually enhances by specific aesthetic embodiments (cf. 96ff.). In *Dead Space*, then, the sublime aesthetics of the gigantic ship ripping apart a planet, the vastness and inescapability of space surrounding the ship, the dwarfing size of the rooms, the constant darkness that leaves the player unable to fully sense his environment are embodiments of the sublime in the game that evoke feelings of despair, uncertainty and fear (cf. 103). In addition, the game's grotesque Necromorph bodies (which within the rules of the gameplay the player needs to dismember in order to overcome), the constant threat to the avatar (and in extension to the player), the shock moments elicited by fast and surprising attacks, and the visual and auditive presentation of repulsive transformations of human bodies (the game is infamous for its violent death scenes and display of viscera), transport the idea of the abject in the game and thus function to facilitate emotions of shock, repulsion and fear. As Järvinen puts it, the aesthetics of the game "set up eliciting conditions for particular emotions" (106), all which provide the player with a "pleasure of the mind" (89) by experiencing them while at the same time, on a meta-level, they are trying to overcome them–a reaction which can be related to Carroll's paradoxical emotion of art horror and which is strongly linked to game mechanics and aesthetics.

I have given these three examples in detail and depth

to show the possibilities of different theoretical approaches to science fiction in video games. As both the medium and the genre evolve, there will be of course many more topics and many more games open for academic exploration, some of which I would like to briefly mention for the reader's discretion and maybe to spark an interest. This list is of course completely selective and exclusively inspired by personal gaming experience:

- *Space Invaders* (Taito, Midway, J 1979) is a classic arcade game in which the player controls a ground vehicle that needs to shoot down an alien invasion force slowly descending from above.
- *Star Trek: Strategic Operations Simulator* (Sega, J 1982) is the first arcade game that allows *Star Trek*-fans to simulate space battle and fight at the controls of a Starfleet-ship. The famous franchise has produced a large number of games since 1971.
- *Elite* (Acorn, UK 1984) is a simulation of space flight and interstellar trade, built solely in vector graphics, in which the player takes the role of a spacefaring trader.
- *Maniac Mansion* (LucasArts, Softgold, US 1987) is the first of several point&click adventures that combine humor, gothic and science fiction. The player has to rescue a girl from a haunted house, but a mad scientist, alien meteorites, and tentacle monsters also play a large part in the story.
- *Starcraft* (Blizzard, US 1998) is the science fiction variant of Warcraft (the strategy pre-cursor to the online roleplaying game World of Warcraft), a real-time strategy game in which players need to build armies and deploy them across a territory in order to conquer it.
- *Halo* (Bungee, Microsoft, US 2002) is a first-person shooter that combines aspects of space opera and military science fiction and that has evolved into a game universe of several more games.
- *Spore* (Maxis, Electronic Arts, US 2008) is a 'life simulation,' or 'evolution simulation,' that sets out with the creation of a simple alien life form, which the player then has to develop over several evolutionary stages into a vast intergalactic empire.
- *Star Wars: The Old Republic* (BioWare, Electronic Arts, CDN/US 2011) is the first massively multiplayer online roleplaying game (MMORPG) in the Star Wars franchise, which has produced a vast number of video games since 1982.

If you have become interested in the topic, there

are two good introductory texts that might provide an overview: Frans Mäyrä's *An Introduction to Video Games* and Simon Egenfeldt-Nielsen et al.'s *Understanding Video Games*. In order to delve deeper into the possibilities and different aspects of gaming I would wholeheartedly recommend Mark J.P. Wolf and Bernhard Perron's *The Video Games Theory Reader* and its second volume of the same name.

As I hope my examples have shown, video games provide science fiction with a new medium to convey its themes and subject matters. They offer new perspectives, allow for other forms of interaction and immersion and they have a different reader response as well as a unique way to produce meaning. As such, they offer scholars working in cultural studies, science fiction or not, a fruitful field of academic analysis and should be part of the scope we consider when dealing with today's culture.

[1] *Spacewar!* is considered the first video game to be created (in 1962; cf. Wolf and Perron, "Introduction" 2). In 1971 a variant of the game was released as a coin-operated arcade game and placed on Stanford University campus.

[2] *Pong* is the first video game to become a sales hit. Its arcade release of 1972 was in 1975 followed up by a home release of the game via the Sears catalog.

[3] Sources: The Entertainment Software Association (www.theesa.com), The Motion Picture Association of America (www.mpaa.org) and the Recording Industry Association of America (www.riaa.com). The ESA figures refer to all software matters, a figure that includes both software and hardware sales would come to $25.1 billion.

[4] Source: The Entertainment Software Association (www.theesa.com/facts).

[5] The analysis of representing the specific video game medium and or the game mechanics in film or prose narrative could be an interesting exception to that claim.

[6] It is important to note that video game studies have so far not produced a coherent terminology of genre and that critical studies normally adhere to genre labels as they are used by video game journalists, such as "shooter," "jump'n'run," "beat'em'up," "adventure," "simulation" or "roleplaying game." These categories are therefore not established in a me-dium specific genre discourse and are presented here for lack of a better terminology.

[7] A sequel, *BioShock 2* (2k Marin, 2k Games, US/AUS 2010), takes place after the events of the first game in Rapture, while a third instalment, *BioShock: Infinite* (Irrational Games, 2k Games, US 2012), is due to be released in 2012 and will take a different alternate history point of divergence, setting the game in 1912 aboard an airborne city. In addition to this, an alternate reality website, several downloadable content packages and a novel have been tied to the game universe.

[8] The game overtly acknowledges its debt to Ayn Rand's works, both philosophical as well as literary. There are strong intertextual references in the game to A*tlas Shrugged* (1957) as well as *The Fountainhead* (1943), to her philosophical thinking, headed under the term Objectivism, and even to the author Ayn Rand herself.

[9] The sequel *Dead Space 2* (Visceral Games, Electronic Arts, US 2011) is set three years after the events of Dead Space, while a prequel called *Dead Space: Extraction* (Visceral Games, Electronic Arts, US 2009) describes the events prior to the original game. The game universe has also spawned two animated films, downloadable content as well as comic books and an alternate reality website.

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The Routledge Concise History of Science Fiction

Patrick B. Sharp

ONE SIGN THAT SF STUDIES is alive and thriving is the proliferation of quality histories that have been written in the past several years. With *The Routledge Concise History of Science Fiction*, Mark Bould and Sherryl Vint provide another solid addition to the field that complements such recent cultural histories of the genre as Roger Luckhurst's *Science Fiction* (2005) and John Rieder's *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction* (2008). Informed by recent developments in genre theory and science studies, Bould and Vint map out a history of SF that charts the debates about the genre at different moments in history. Rather than giving a taxonomic definition of science fiction that they then use to survey the field, Bould and Vint examine how SF definitions have evolved as authors, publishers, fans, and scholars have included and excluded specific texts in their attempts to define their own visions of the genre. Drawing from the work of science studies (and more specifically the work of Bruno Latour), Bould and Vint consider how people involved in ongoing debates about the genre draw upon a multitude of social and cultural networks in order to give legitimacy to their definitions and to move SF in the directions they desire (4-5). Therefore, one major goal of their own history of the genre is to "foreground the multiplicity of SF and its embeddedness in the wider social world" (5).

Bould and Vint self-consciously limit the scope of their history to "SF as literature," which is consistent with the book series of which it is a part (*The Routledge Concise History of Literature* series). However, they do make frequent references to other media to show the contexts and limitations of literary histories of SF (including their own). Because of their areas of expertise, Bould and Vint also limit their history to "Anglophone SF and authors primarily from the US and the UK," though they readily acknowledge the importance of other strong SF traditions and the limitations of their