



# Conomastics: The Naming of Science Fiction Conventions

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# Conomastics: onomastics of cons

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*Say what?*

# Conventions of fans of sf & related interests

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- *in the sense of*  
“more-or-less organized gatherings”  
*not*  
“literary tropes” or “accepted norms”
- periodic, irregular, or one-off
- stationary or travelling

*(This “recycled-paper” background marks slides that I decided to skip during the presentation, generally because they contain more detail than would fit well in the flow and the time.)*

## Periodicity

- Typically annual; some are more frequent, some irregular, and some are one-shots
- Some one-shots develop into ongoing cons
- ◆ Organization and goals
  - Typically non-profit, run by groups of fans with some continuity for the purpose of sharing and encouraging their shared interest
  - Some cons are for-profit, very commercial
  - This study concentrates on the first kind

# Conventions of fans of sf & related interests

*including*

- “hard” science fiction
- fantasy
- alternate history
- and many other subgenres that are more useful to marketers than to fans
- sf: “speculative fiction”

# Conventions of fans of sf & related interests

- media: movies & TV, including non-sf
- animation
- music
- gaming
- graphic fiction
- horror
- furry
- ...





## Focus of con

- ◆ **General sf**
- ◆ **Media**
- ◆ **Anime/manga**
- ◆ **Gaming**
- ◆ **Filk**
- ◆ **Costuming**
- ◆ **Fanzines**
- ◆ **Art**
- ◆ **Fantasy**
- ◆ **Horror**
- ◆ **Furry**
- ◆ **Symposia**
- ◆ **Con-running**
- ◆ **Relaxacons**
- ◆ **Medieval/  
Renaissance**
- ◆ **...**

# Conventions of fans of sf & related interests

- readers
- moviegoers
- TV viewers
- gamers (live action role playing [LARP], video, board, cards...)
- con organizers
- academics
- ...



# Basic names: theme and variations

# Toponym + “convention” or synonym

- ◆ Chicon (Chicago)
- ◆ Nolacon (New Orleans, LA)
- ◆ NorWesCon (Portland, Oregon)
- ◆ Sydcon (Sydney, Australia)
- ◆ Finncon (Helsinki, Finland)
- ◆ Denvention (Denver) (*convention*)
- ◆ Rusfurence (Russia) (*conference, furry*)
- ◆ Disclave (Washington, D.C.) (*conclave*)



## Variant toponymic

# Toponym → **nickname or allusion to city or state**

- ◆ **Magicon** (Orlando, Fla.: Disney Magic Kingdom)
- ◆ **MileHiCon** (Denver, the Mile High City)
- ◆ **LoneStarCon** (Texas, the Lone Star State)
- ◆ **SwanCon** (Perth, Western Australia: black swan)
- ◆ **SpoCon** (Spokane, Wash.)

# Toponym → nickname or allusion to institution or other characteristic

- ◆ Aggiecon (Texas A&M, home of the Aggies)
- ◆ Bubonicon (Albuquerque: bubonic plague)
- ◆ Iguanacon (Phoenix, Ariz.)
- ◆ Conestoga (Tulsa, Oklahoma: settlers' wagons)  
(*portmanteau*)
- ◆ Vericon (Harvard Univ.: motto "Veritas")

... and nothing else in particular

- ◆ Con\*Cept
- ◆ ConClave
- ◆ ConDOR
- ◆ CONduit
- ◆ Conucopia
- ◆ CONvergence
- ◆ Conspiracy



## ...PLACE

- SpoCon (Spokane, Wash.)
- ConJosé (San José, Calif.)



## ...TIME

- Hal-Con (Saitama-shi, Saitama-ken, Japan)

- “Hal” → *haru* = はる ‘springtime’ (+ *こん kon*)



- HAL-9000 from “2001: A Space Odyssey”

- LepreCon (St. Patrick’s Day)

- Millennium Philcon

- Philadelphia, 2001 WorldCon
- *Millennium Falcon*, Han Solo’s ship in Star Wars

# Names referring to the con's theme

## Filk music: the folk music of sf fandom

## USA

- **Consonance** (Milpitas, Calif.)
- **Conchord** (Woodland Hills, Calif.)
- **GAFilk** (Georgia, *this weekend!* 🙄)
- **Conflikt** (Seattle) (anagram of “filk”)
- **The Floating Northeast Filk Convention** (NEFilk: “any filk”):
  - **ConCerto**            New Jersey suburbs of Philadelphia
  - **ConCertino**        Massachusetts
  - **Contata**             New York City area
  - **Conterpoint**       Baltimore / D.C. area
- **FilkCamp** (Muncie, Ind.)
- **Ohio Valley Filk Fest** (Columbus, OH)

(Names in red are musical terms or variations on them.)

(Data from *Interfilk* and *NEFilk*)

# Outside US

- British Filk Con (traveling)
- FilKONtario (Mississauga, Ont., Canada) (KON)
- Das Frühlingsfest der Filksmusik (Bad Salzdetfurth, Germany) (German folk music gathering, Das Frühlingsfest der Volksmusik)
- HarmUni (Cambridge, England) (harmony, university)
- Filk Continental (Kirchen-Freusberg, Germany)

*(Data from Interfilk)*



Theme: Filk

# The UK annual filk conventions

Contabile	<i>cantabile</i>	Digeri-Douze	<i>didgeridoo, douze</i>
Con2bile	<i>Contabile 2</i>	Conthirteena	<i>concertina, thirteen</i>
Treble	<i>e.g., treble clef</i>	Contabile Fortean	<i>Contabile 14</i>
FourPlay	<i>play</i>	Quinze Filk Festival	<i>Cannes</i>
Pentatonic			<i>Film,quinze</i>
VIbraphone	<i>VI</i>	16 Tones	<i>"Sixteen Tons"</i>
Transept	<i>sept</i>	Dixseption	<i>dix-sept</i>
Obliter-8	<i>8; filk song</i>	1812Tone	<i>18, 12-tone</i>
	<i>"Falling Down on Milton Keynes" [location]</i>	D'Zenove Convention	<i>Geneva</i>
HarmonIX	<i>IX, harmonics</i>		<i>Conv., dezenove (Braz.Port.)</i>
Decadence	<i>dec-, cadence</i>	2t0nic	<i>20, tonic,</i>
XIlophone	<i>XI, xylophone</i>		<i>Teutonic (w.r.t. a German guest)</i>
		aXXidental	<i>XXI, # and b</i>
		Van der Filk	<i>vingt-deux,</i>
			<i>Vander Valk</i>

Anime:

Japanese animation

*(fandom overlaps heavily with...)*

Manga:

Japanese comics

## "Anime" + location

- Anime Los Angeles
- Anime Weekend Atlanta
- Anime St. Louis (now Kawa Kon)
- Anime Boston
- Anime Festival Wichita
- Anime Detroit
- AnimeIowa *[sic]*

*(Data and analysis from Petréa Mitchell)*



## Japanese word, often relating to anime

- **Otakuthon** (otaku [as Eng. loan] = obsessive anime/manga fan + marathon)
- **Kumoricon** (cloudy), Portland, OR
- **Naka-Kon** (middle/heart), Kansas City, KS
- **Tekkoshocon** (steel industry), Pittsburgh
- **Tora-Con** (tiger), RIT (mascot: tiger)
- **Sakura-Con** (cherry blossom) (springtime)

*(Most data and analysis from Petréa Mitchell)*

## Japanese-English pun

- Ohayocon (good morning), Columbus, Ohio
- Nan Desu Kan (nan desu ka='what is it?'), Denver
- Daikon (radish; big con) Japanese national con, held in Osaka 大阪, whose first character 大, meaning 'big', can also be pronounced *dai*, as in 大根 *daikon*, which refers to a popular type of Japanese radish but can also be understood as 'big con' or 'Osaka-con'

- ◆ Readercon (printed text sf)
- ◆ MaulCon (gaming; held at a mall)
- ◆ Browncoat Ball (Firefly TV series)
- ◆ Festival of Fantastic Films
- ◆ Darkover (Marian Zimmer Bradley's Darkover novels)
- ◆ FurcoNZ (furry con in New Zealand)
- ◆ Necronomicon (roleplaying, originally focusing on horror and psychological darkness)

# Cons focusing on subpopulations of the sf community

## ◆ Gaylaxicon: (*gay, galaxy*)

“gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, transgendered people and their friends”

## ◆ Sirens: (*Greek mythology*)

“Inspired by the daring adventures of women characters and compelled by the brilliant works of women authors, Sirens is a conference dedicated to women in fantasy literature.”

## ◆ Smofcon: (*acronym “smof”*)

“Secret Masters Of Fandom Convention. We are the people behind the scenes at your local Science Fiction conventions. ... It is where we gather to exchange our insights into what has happened during the previous year, at both the local level and at the most recently held meeting of the World Science Fiction Society (also known as Worldcon).”



# Language in onomastics

## No “cons” in French!\*

- |                |              |                  |               |
|----------------|--------------|------------------|---------------|
| ◆ Ad Astra     | Toronto, ON  | ◆ Draconis       | Montreal, QC  |
| ◆ Anticipation | Montreal, QC | ◆ FanExpo Canada |               |
| ◆ CanGames     | Ottawa, ON   | ◆ Gatecon        | Vancouver, BC |
| ◆ Canvention   | various      | ◆ Hal-Con        | Halifax, NS   |
| ◆ ConAdian     | Winnipeg, MB | ◆ Otakuthon      | Montreal, QC  |
| ◆ Con-Version  | Calgary, AB  | ◆ Polaris        | Toronto, ON   |
|                |              | ◆ SFContario     | Toronto, ON   |
|                |              | ◆ Torcon         | Toronto, ON   |
|                |              | ◆ VCON           | Surrey, BC    |

*That's what the Anticipation folks told me. Then I found*

- ◆ Con\*Cept Montreal, ON \*

*Who knew? [see Notes]*

# *Anticipation* > ‘anticipation’

The 2009 WorldCon, held in Montreal, was called “Anticipation”, which in English and French means looking forward to the future, but in French also refers to literature looking forward to the future:

*un roman d’anticipation* = a science fiction novel





## Those UK filkers again

The UK filk cons portmanteau numbers into their names, often reaching to other languages:

- ◆ Transept *French*
- ◆ Decadence *Greek, Latin*
- ◆ Digeri-Douze *French*
- ◆ Quinze Filk Festival *French*
- ◆ Dixseption *French*
- ◆ D'Zenove Convention *Braz. Portuguese*
- ◆ Van der Filk (vingt-deux) *French*



# Klingon

The Klingon Language Institute has its yearly *qep'a* ('big meeting') and also helps members arrange local *qepHom* ('little meeting(s)').

**Seriation:  
distinguishing this  
year's con from last  
year's**

## ◆ 1,2,3,... or I, II, III...

- Not necessarily in sequential years, esp. with traveling cons:

- Loncon I (1957 Worldcon)

- Loncon II (1965 Worldcon)

- Not always consistent:

- Aussiecon One, Two, Three, 4

## ◆ Year number

- Nippon2007

- Millennium Philcon (held in 2001)

# Silicon and its successors

Society for Interactive Literature (SIL; now called LARPA):

◆ Silicon I, II, 2.5, III, 3.5, IV, V, VI.

Continued as

◆ Intercon VII, 7.5, VIII, IX, 9.5, IX, 10.5, ...  
XV, 15.5, **A, B, C, ... J** (in 2010)

## Sequential themes

Con\*Stellation (aka Con†Stellation) uses Roman numerals, mostly: I, II, II.V, III... Each con is subtitled with the name of a constellation:

- 2009: Con\*Stellation XXVIII: Vulpecula
- 2008: Con\*Stellation XXVII: Cassiopeia
- 2007: Con\*Stellation XXVI: Ophiuchus

For the second Con\*Stellation, Gemini (astronomical symbol: ♊) was the obvious choice.

(Not to be confused with the 1983 Worldcon, also known as ConStellation, held in Baltimore.) *...which brings us to...*

## Unrelated cons with the same or similar names

*include...*

- iCON                    Istanbul

possibly for the dotted capital “i” of *Istanbul*

- Icon                    Coralville, Iowa

- I-CON                  Stony Brook, Long Island, NY

- ICON festival        Tel Aviv, Israel

- Sydcon                Sydney, Australia

- Sydcon                Malmö, in the south (syd) of Sweden



## Allusions & cross-references

- ◆ When Boskone (itself a pun on \*Boscon), left Boston for a few years, the gap was filled by Arisia.
  
- ◆ The Washington, DC area con Disclave (for District of Columbia and possibly also for Dante's City of Dis) spawned a couple of relaxacons called Datclave.



# A few bits too good to leave out

- ◆ The Second Occasional LoneStarCon Science Fiction Convention & Chili Cook-off
- ◆ The Wrath of Con (Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan)

- ◆ *Specific sources not listed here:*
  - *The home pages of many, many cons.*
  - *Personal communications with numerous individuals.*
  
- ◆ North American Science Fiction Association (NESFA).
  - The Long List of NASFiCs. <http://www.nesfa.org/data/LL/TheLongListNasfic.html>
  - The Long List of World Science Fiction Conventions (Worldcons). <http://www.nesfa.org/data/LL/TheLongList.html>
  
- ◆ *Picofarad* (“*The zine of little capacity*”).
  - Sf-oriented fanzine by Petréa Mitchell. Print and online (<http://www.bidalaka.com/picofarad/index.html>)
  
- ◆ Wikipedia includes a number of lists of cons, with links, including:
  - [List\\_of\\_anime\\_conventions](#)
  - [List\\_of\\_multigenre\\_conventions](#)
  - [List\\_of\\_science\\_fiction\\_conventions](#)

and many more, to be listed in the paper