



# Fanfiction in the Library

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# Aims

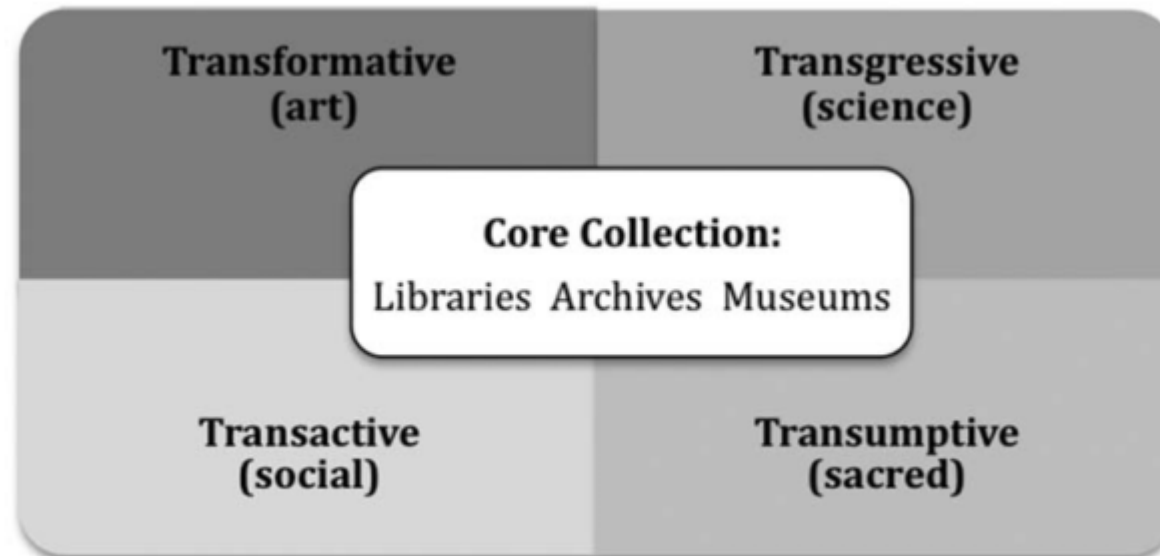
- To gain insight into the extent to which fanfiction is collected and managed by libraries in the UK
- To gain insight into the reasons for this

## **Research methods**

- Literature review
- Collection policy examination
- Brief survey of library & information science students and alumni

# Literature review

- Only 1 article dealing with issues of fanfiction collections (Hart et al., 1999). LIS practitioners do not focus on fan-produced materials.
- Recent articles focusing on specific collections, e.g. Sandy Hereld fanzine collection (Brett 2013, 2015); U of Iowa speculative fiction collection (Chant 2015) etc.
- Concept of 'anti-collection' – fanfiction archives as ¼ of this (Martens, 2011).



Sectors of the anti-collection (Martens, 2011).

# Why is fanfiction ignored in libraries?

1. **Not proper books.** GoodReads book reviews:
  - “I thought this site was for real books. Is there any way to restrict my searches to avoid this stuff?”
  - “I thought this site was for reviews about books I could get in my library.”
2. **Don't fit library processes.** Difficult for libraries to handle:
  - Not formally published (e.g. no ISBN)
  - No standard metadata
  - Not available through usual acquisition processes.
3. **Concerns about intellectual property.**



# Fandom in libraries

- Increasing interest in catering for fans as library users in general (Pearson, 2006; Brenner, 2013).
- Recommending sources and examples of fanfiction (Griffis & Jones, 2008; Philpot, 2014).
- Fanfiction as literacy instruction (Kell, 2009).
- Running in-library fan events (Rogers-Whitehead, 2015; Atkinson, 2015)
- **But** collecting fanworks is limited – mostly fanzines.



# Collection policies

Fanworks were not mentioned in the collection policies of the UK libraries surveyed:

1. British Library (including web archive)
2. National Library of Scotland
3. Cambridge University Library
4. University College London Library
5. Oxford Brookes University Library
6. University of the Arts Library
7. City of London Libraries and Archives
8. Tameside public libraries
9. Wiltshire public libraries
10. Bishopsgate Institute Library and Archive

Fanzines are the main area of library/archive collections:

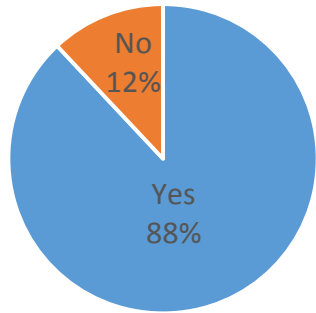
- Legal deposit (British Library)
- Donations
- Personal interest of librarian or archivist

# Survey of LIS students and alumni

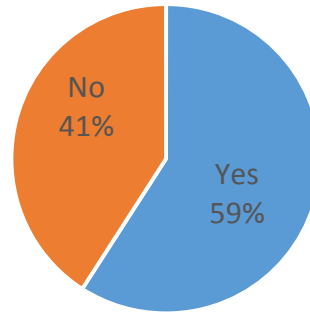
- Current students of Library & Information science and alumni
- Participants recruited via #citylis hashtag on Twitter, and LIS course postings on Moodle
- 25 participants
- 52% female; 48% male
- Age range: 20-40; majority 25-30 (44%)
- Most British, but two Americans, one Spanish and one Korean.

# Survey of LIS students and alumni 2

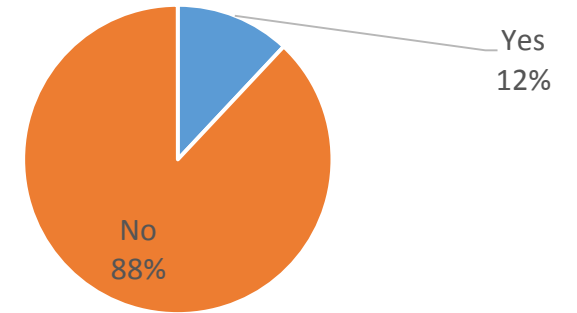
Had you ever heard of fanfiction before attending your library or information science course?



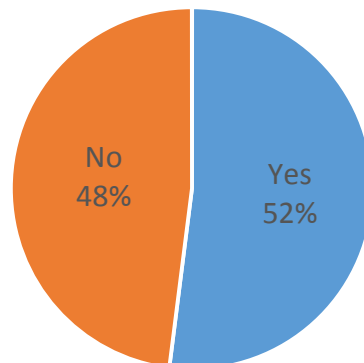
Do you, or have you ever read, fanfiction?



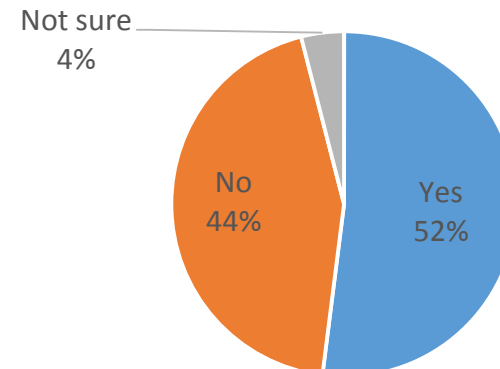
Are you aware of any physical or printed collections of fanfiction? (e.g. in libraries, archives etc.)



Are you aware of any online collections of fanfiction?




Do you think libraries, archives, or other institutions should collect fanfiction?





# Quotes



“Libraries should preserve fanfiction just as they would any other documents because otherwise the information those documents contain and all the potential uses that information would have are lost.”

*Participant 1*


# Quotes

“I'm torn on the subject. On the one hand it is an important cultural institution at this point, and provides wonderful insight for those studying fanworks, feminism, LGBT issues, among other subjects. On the other hand, part of the reason fanfiction is so diverse and weird and sprawling is its inherent illegality and non-for-profit status.”

*Participant 4*



# Quotes



“I think online archives manage themselves well and already have great metadada and information management.”

*Participant 6*

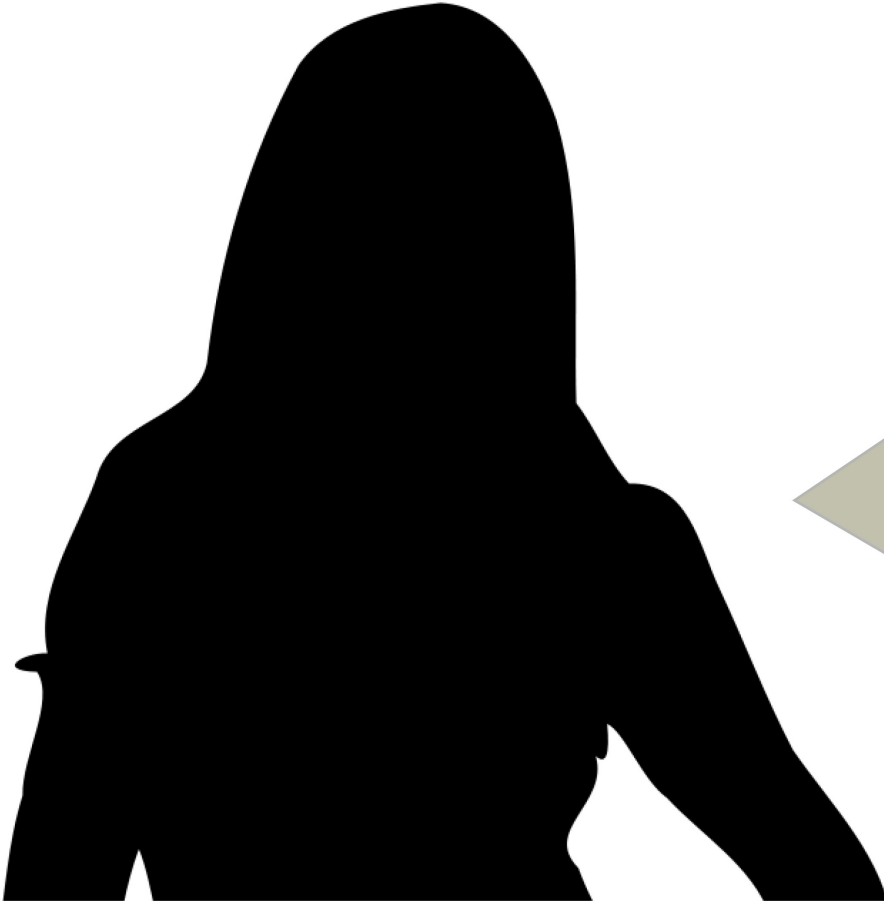
# Quotes

“I think fanfiction as an alt representation of fictional universes, should maintain their otherness by being apart from their origin universe...i think fanfiction should be organised or curated by those that create and love it, the fans.”

*Participant 18*



# Quotes



“...it could be a hard thing to catalogue when it comes to a digital repository. I think it would be cool to be able to check out a physical copy of a fanfiction, but as a fanfiction writer myself, I know I have many unfinished stories out there, and even stories that I finish and then decide to go back years later and revamp. I'm not sure how a library could account for the evolving nature of fanfics.”

*Participant 8*





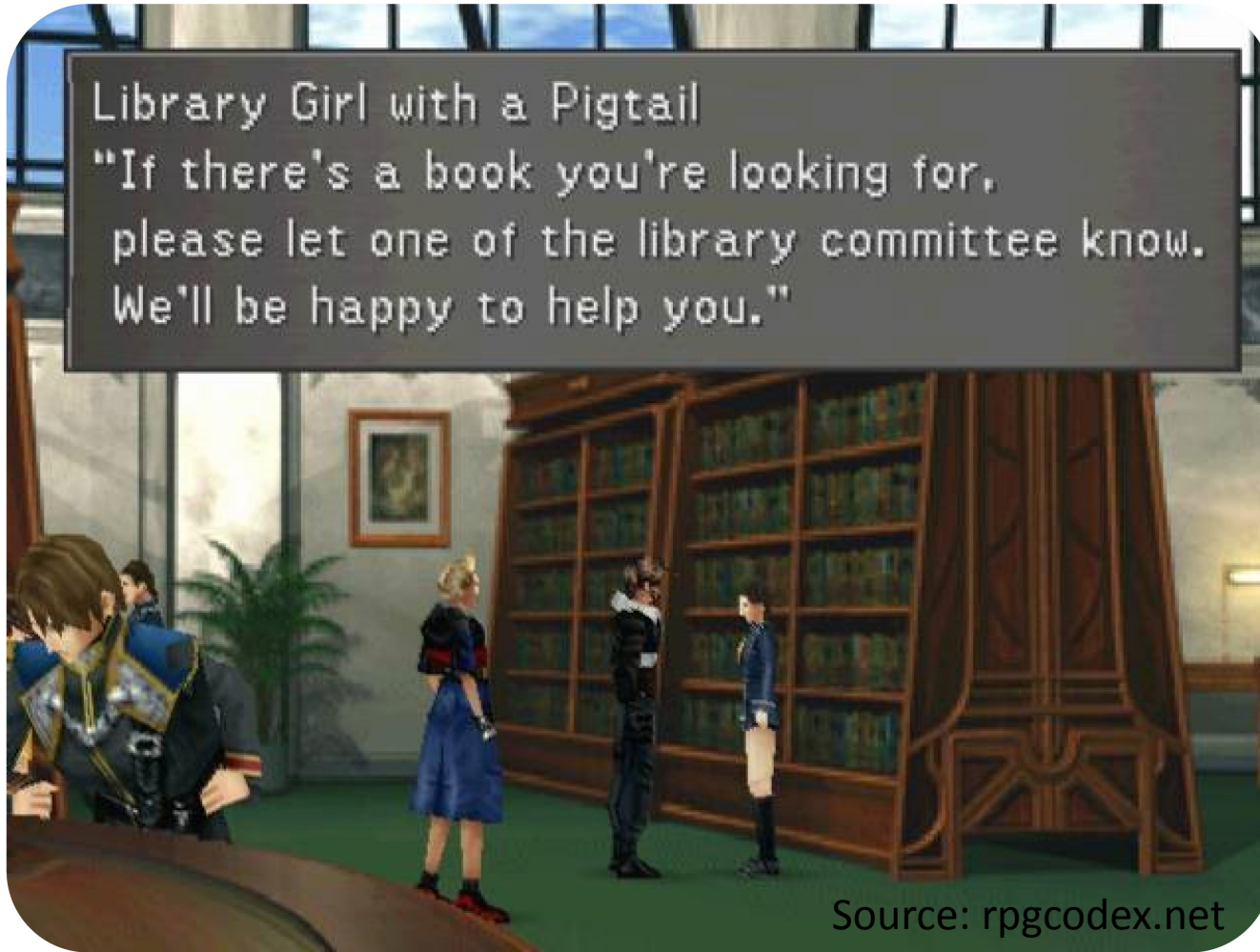
# Conclusions

- No collection policies for fanfiction (fanworks) in UK libraries
- Reluctance due to:
  - Fanfiction isn't like 'proper books'
  - Requires non-standard acquisition and bibliographic processes
  - Copyright issues
- Findings from #citylis students and alumni:
  - Majority had heard of fanfiction
  - More than half read fanfiction; 32% wrote fanfiction; 13% collected fanfiction
  - Mixed reaction to library collections of fanfiction; 52% said yes, but qualified position. Important points:
    - Needs to be relevant to collection; specialist libraries might be more appropriate.
    - Probably should be digital archiving rather than physical copies.
    - Working with fans themselves is preferable/ fans do a good enough job anyway.
    - "There is far too much of it and it is a waste of resources."
    - It's culturally important and it should be preserved.

# Fanfiction...

There is a 'dark side' to fanfiction, in regard to how it is understood and valued, which feeds an invisible black hole in our cultural heritage.

Creators, fans and the library communities need to work together to combat this.



# Questions ?

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